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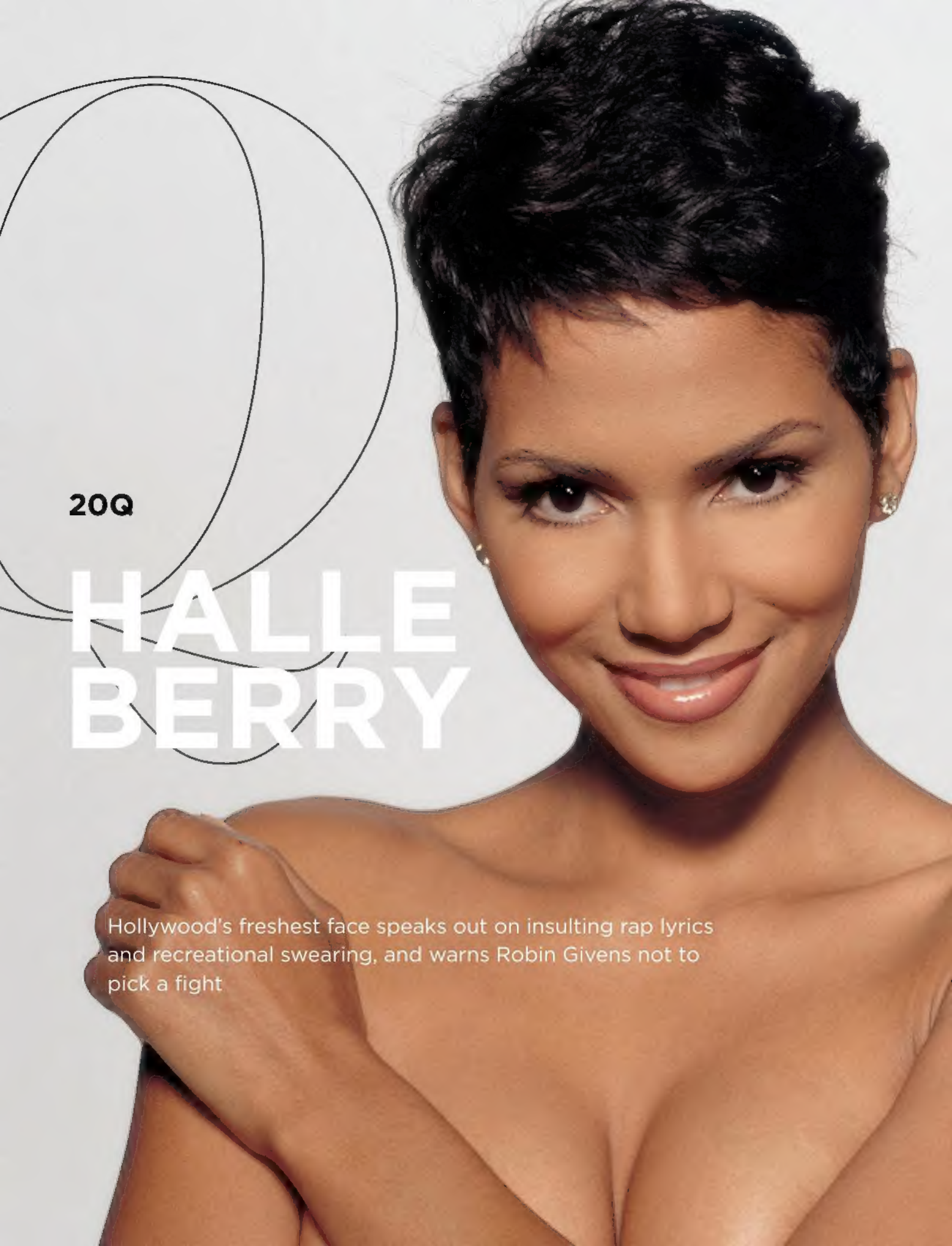
PLAYBOY

20Q

HALLE BERRY



Hollywood's freshest face speaks out on insulting rap lyrics and recreational swearing, and warns Robin Givens not to pick a fight

Halle Berry, the 25-year-old Cleveland-born actress and former beauty pageant contestant, knows how to leave a lasting impression. She brought an earthbound sweetness to Strictly Business and The Last Boy Scout and straight-backed dignity to the six-hour miniseries Queen. For Spike Lee's Jungle Fever, she gave a rancid-mouthed crackhead some dimension. In Boomerang, Berry turned her third-lead, nice-girl art director into an impressive scene-stealer.

Now Berry is taking off in another direction, showing up as Rosetta Stone, a slithering, prehistoric temptress in Universal's The Flintstones, co-starring John Goodman and Elizabeth Taylor. Midway through the shoot, we sent writer Margy Rochlin to speak with Berry at her West Hollywood hotel room: g"The first thing Halle did," says Rochlin, "was offer me a weak handshake and admit that the idea of a long interview made her nervous. Then she threw herself down on her white couch and blabbed for the next two hours. She kept pleading, g'If you get bored, just tell me.' She never gave me a reason to."

Q1: *In order to prepare for your role as a crack addict in Jungle Fever, you didn't bathe for 10 days. What is the upside of skipping your morning shower?*
BERRY: It was a freeing experience. We are so civilized. We have to be clean and smell nice and look pretty. It was refreshing just to let myself go and not care.

I dread getting up in the morning and taking a shower, putting on makeup and fixing my hair. With that role, I could just pop out of bed, have my breakfast and go. I didn't even brush my teeth. You know how you get those little razor bumps when you shave under your arms too much? I didn't have that. And when I finally did shave, it was like a baby's bottom under my arms. I was showing everybody: p"Look how pretty my underarms are!"
Q2: *Did a different sort of guy start following you home?*
BERRY: The bums! [Laughs] The bums were like, m"Hey, baby, you're looking pretty good." It was funny because I'd actually talk to them. Some of them are crazy; they really need to be in a mental institution. But others really do have something to say. They're just down on their luck.
Q3: *We know about the straw, blue, rasp and cran. What distinguishes the Halleberry?*
BERRY: The Halleberry is a very sweet berry, and that's important. Being sweet and nice to people goes a long, long way.
Q4: *When can a lady use four-letter words?*
BERRY: When I'm really in the mood or pissed off, I can curse with the best of them. That is so much a part of me. But I curse only when I'm with my friends—I don't do it in public. In Jungle Fever, I could do and say whatever I wanted because I was that character. I could say m"Fuck everybody!" I had all these fantasies that I would tell Spike to fuck himself. But I never did.
Q5: *What's something that your husband, Atlanta Braves outfielder David Justice, doesn't appreciate about you that a movie director would?*
BERRY: That I cry a lot. When I cry my husband sometimes doesn't react like there's a woman crying but says, g"Come on, stop crying." If I didn't cry all the time, maybe he'd be more frantic like he's supposed to be. But I'm just real emotional. I cry when I'm mad, I cry when I'm sad, I cry when I'm happy. I cry a lot. Except when I'm doing a film. When they say "cry," all of a sudden I get dry.

Q6: *What do you do when you go to the ballpark and your husband goes 0 for 4?*
BERRY: I couldn't care less. I love him no matter what he's batting. But I feel bad for him because I know he's going to feel really down about it. He's going to take the heat from the press, from the fans. I hurt for him.

But I don't go to the games anymore unless they're All-Star or playoff games. Now I watch them on TV. Whenever I was home, I would always go to the stadium and sit there and be a good wife. But I get so frustrated when he's not having a good day. I hear people saying, p"Justice, you suck!" "Trade him!" Or he'll come up to bat and they'll say, "This time try to hit something besides air!" I take it personally. He's my baby, and I just don't like it. If I weren't Halle Berry, I would go off on some of those people. I feel like saying, "Hey, buddy, can you hit a ball going 95 miles an hour? Then shut the fuck up!" That is the ultimate fantasy.
Q7: *How did you make your peace with baseball?*
BERRY: I had to make a real effort at first. Those games are long. At my first baseball game, I was ready to go after an hour. Once I started to learn about the game—the intricate parts of it, the pitches, the plays, how to keep score—that made the time go by. Now I can sit through a three-hour game and think, Wow, where did the time go?

"I dread getting up in the morning and taking a shower, putting on makeup and fixing my hair."

BY **MARGY ROCHLIN**

PHOTO BY **GWENDOLEN CATES**

Q8: *You were first attracted to your husband when you spotted him on MTV. If someone hadn't hooked you up, what would have been your next move?*

BERRY: I had it all planned out, which is kind of sick. I was in South Carolina making Queen, and I was going to have my sister go with me to a Braves game. I was going to come up with some reason why I had to go down into the tunnel. I mean, I wasn't going to come on to him. I had just gotten over a really bad relationship and I had banned men for at least a year.

But I just knew that if I could look him in the face, he'd fall in love with me and I'd fall in love with him.

I'd already started to go through the motions. I found out when the team was going to be in Atlanta and I tried to plan my flight. Then all of a sudden it hit me: No man's going to want a woman this desperate. I'm going to look like an asshole.

Then, two weeks later a guy called me from one of the Cincinnati papers to interview me. At the end he said, p"You know, I've never done this before, but I have a really good friend who absolutely adores you and would love an autographed picture." I said, "Who?" And he said, "David Justice of the Atlanta Braves." I dropped the phone on the floor. I said, "Give him my phone number instead of an autograph." So an hour later David called me and we talked for three hours. We hit it off like [*snaps fingers*] that.

Q9: *Given the relative sexiness of baseball players, why did you go after a power hitter rather than a relief pitcher?*

BERRY: Pitchers can look just like regular guys—short and kind of scrawny. Power hitters generally have better bodies and butts. They're stronger.

Q10: *You've been a lustful reference in at least one rap song. Is this something you support or condone?*

BERRY: I have a real problem with all those songs that refer to women as bitches or in other derogatory terms. I don't listen to them, nor do I buy them, nor do I encourage others to. People I know say, g"Well, I don't listen to the words, I like the beat." They don't realize that subconsciously they're hearing the words. It's degrading. As women, we're fighting so hard to be viewed in another way. I don't like my name associated with it. I know they think they're giving me a compliment, but I don't see it that way.

Q11: *In 1985 you were Miss Teen All American. In 1986 you were first runner-up for Miss USA. As the veteran of many beauty pageants, tell us: What makes a bad loser and what makes a bad winner?*

BERRY: After the pageant, the bad loser will go around bad-mouthing everything. She'll put down the girl who won: g"Look at her—she has fake tits! She has acne!" Just being obnoxious. She can't get over the fact that she lost: "Hello? You didn't win, goodbye, go home now."

A bad winner? I know this after judging pageants: During the interview these girls give their perfect pageant answers: p"Yes, I'd like to save the world." Then afterward at the dinner with the winners, these girls turn into total snobs. They've already used you and abused you and gotten what they wanted out of you—the crown. Then they're like monsters.

Q12: *How did your more highbrow colleagues respond to the news that you'd signed on for The Flintstones?*

BERRY: It's amazing how people can be so negative. Some people have said to me, g"The Flintstones? That's a cartoon. I thought you wanted to be a serious actor. You just did Queen. I mean, Halle!"

But not everything's going to be Queen or Malcolm X. This film was really important to me because to be a black woman and to be the object of everybody's desire in this movie is such a coup. The fact that these executives at the studio, who are all white males, took the risk to have a black woman as this character says a lot as to where we're going. No, we don't want to be just sex objects or be just beautiful. But the level of consciousness is being raised, and that's important to me. We're starting to be seen a little bit differently.

Q13: *You haven't shown your revealing Flintstones costume to your husband. To soften the blow, are you going to give him an exclusive preview?*

BERRY: No! He'll just see it on premiere night, if he can. He worries a lot about that kind of thing. I'd cause him a year of undue stress if I involved him with it. He's read things like, g"She hasn't shown her husband," so he's like, "Well, what is it?" But sometimes the less he knows, the better. When it comes out, he'll see it. He'll see that it is what it is.

Q14: *"It" is?*

BERRY: Very bare. A long fake-fur skirt with those jagged edges and a split all the way up the side. The top is tight, very pushy-uppy. Thin straps, barely there. It's like a bikini. But more than actually seeing the costume, it's what I do in the costume that makes it even worse. I seduce Fred. I slither around, crawl over desks and use everything I have to get him entranced—which I do pretty much throughout the whole movie. He's putty in my hands.

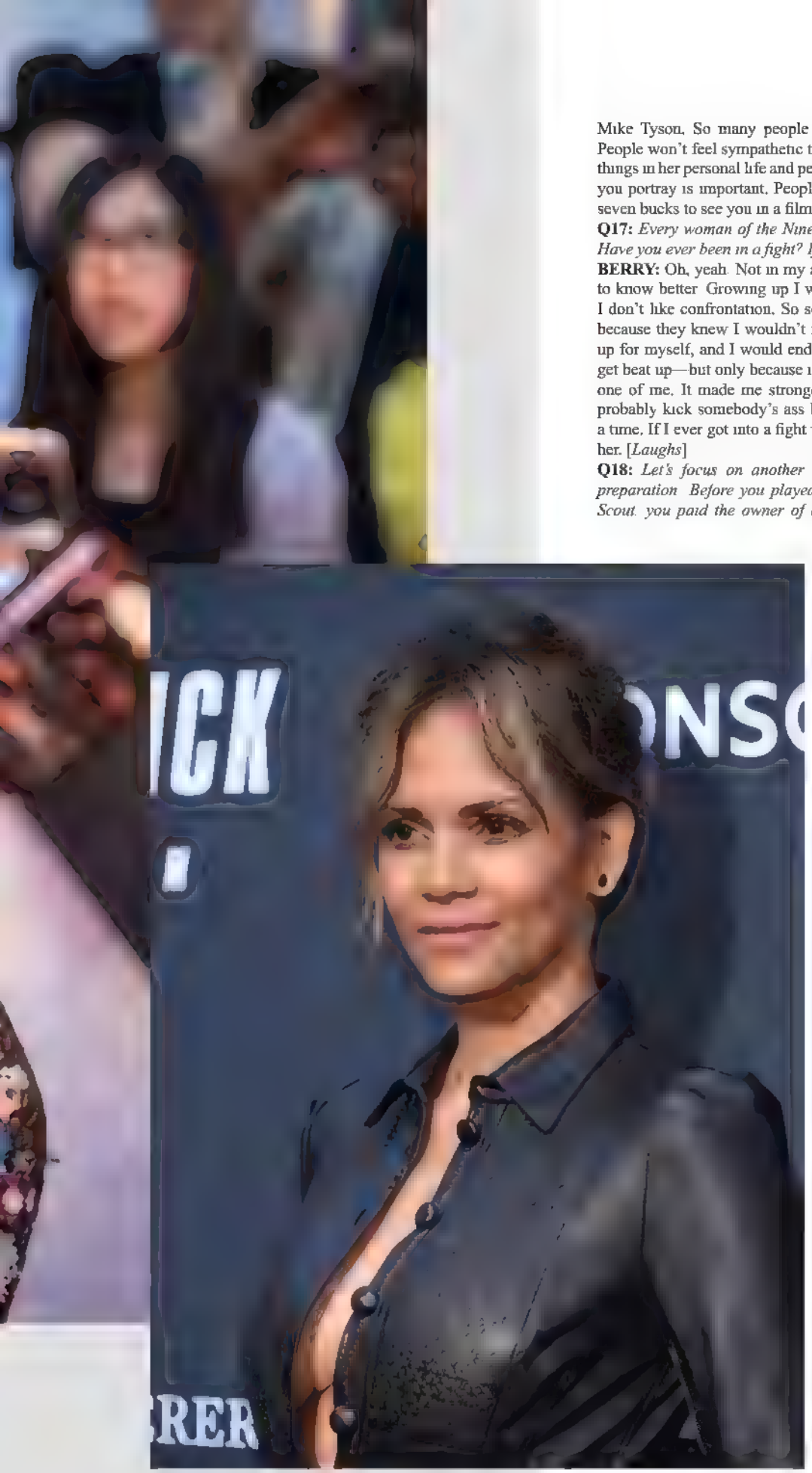
Q15: *No matter what film you're in, you're always the one who receives the kudos. Are your co-stars wary or curious about such a record?*

BERRY: Hmm. Did you read my reviews for Queen? There were a few that really hit me hard. The harshest thing somebody said was that I didn't have the emotional range or capacity that this character needed. I thought, Say a lot of things, but I don't think that's true. I'm the most emotional person I know. They could have said other things—that I was stoic or stiff—but not that I don't have the emotional range.

I've learned not to take it personally. But it's hard. I gave my blood, sweat and tears for that role. I was working with a broken tailbone, in pain. So when someone just uses a stroke of the pen to dismiss what I've worked so hard at, it's disheartening.

Q16: *Is it easier for a film critic to like the work of someone who might actually be a nice person in real life?*

BERRY: Yes, that certainly was the case with me and Robin Givens in Boomerang. People thought I played myself and she played herself. Robin has gotten such bad press because of what she did to



Mike Tyson. So many people in the business think she's bitchy. People won't feel sympathetic toward her until she starts doing nice things in her personal life and people start writing about it. The image you portray is important. People ultimately have to like you to pay seven bucks to see you in a film.

Q17: *Every woman of the Nineties needs a method of self-defense. Have you ever been in a fight? If so, who won?*

BERRY: Oh, yeah. Not in my adult life, since I'm now old enough to know better. Growing up I would get beat up a lot. I'm passive. I don't like confrontation. So sometimes people would pick on me because they knew I wouldn't fight back. But sometimes I'd stand up for myself, and I would end up in a fight. And, usually, I would get beat up—but only because it would be three or four of them and one of me. It made me stronger. If I ever fought one-on-one, I'd probably kick somebody's ass because I'm used to fighting four at a time. If I ever got into a fight with Robin Givens, I'd probably kill her. [*Laughs*]

Q18: *Let's focus on another of your daring adventures in role preparation. Before you played an exotic dancer in The Last Boy Scout, you paid the owner of a club to let you dance in a bikini top and G-string. What's the view from the perspective of a stripper?*

BERRY: It's a bunch of drooling, drunk men looking up your underpants. Nothing against the girls who do it, but it was humiliating for me. You're just a thing. They're saying things to you.

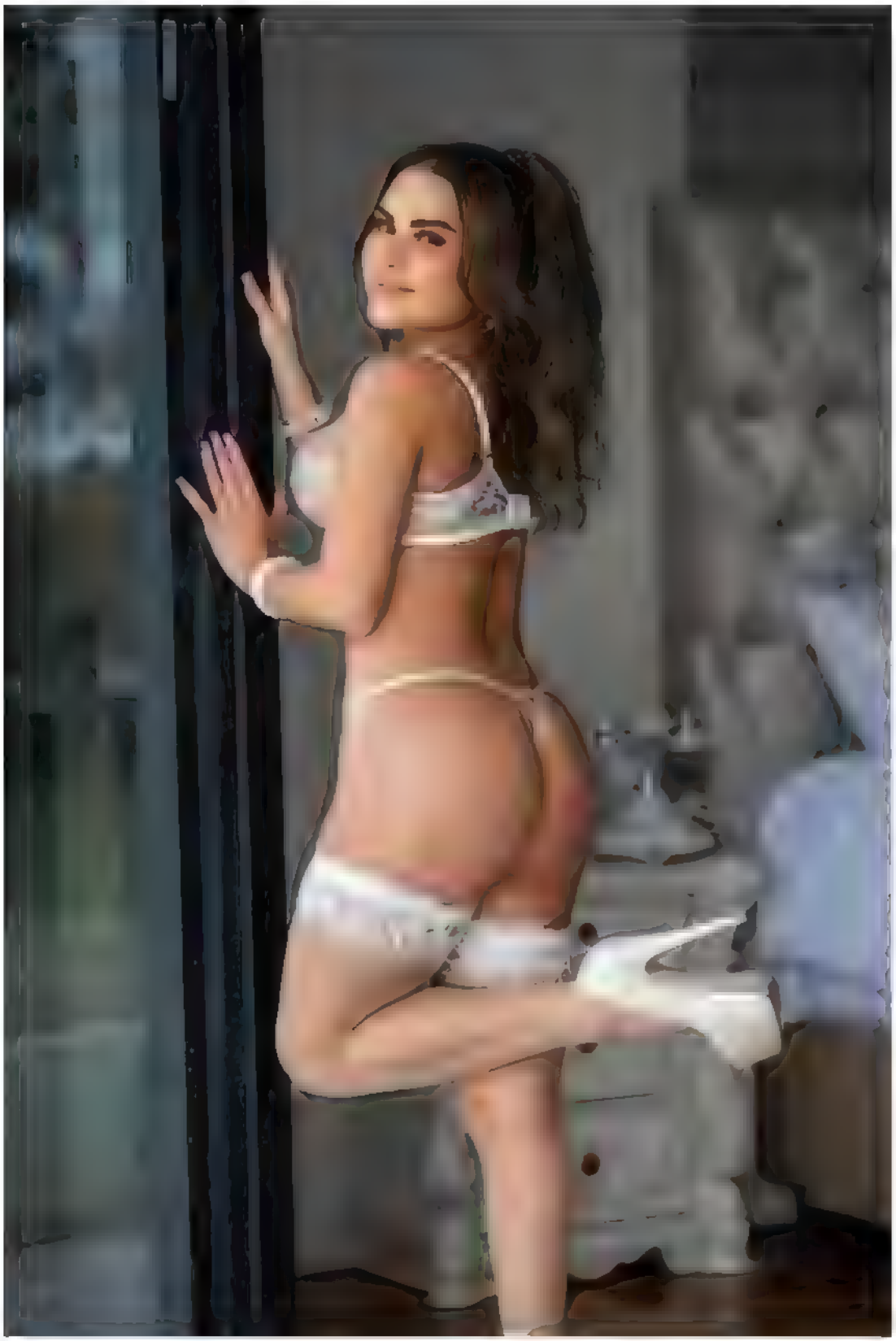
Q19: *What comments did you appreciate? And what should have been left unsaid?*

BERRY: I didn't appreciate any of them—until I was walking out and one of the guys said to me, g"Sweetheart, you don't belong here. Get out."

Q20: *As a teenager you worked in clothing stores. What life lessons did you pick up while behind the cash register?*

BERRY: When I worked in retail, the customer was always right. No matter what they do or what they think, the customer is always right. They forget that out here in Hollywood.

PLAYMATE
KATIJA
Cortez



We're happy to have you feature on Playboy! Can you give us a bit of a background on your career as a model and where it all started? Thank you for having me. Where do I even start!? It's been a crazy journey, to say the least. Before any of this, I actually had a career as an accountant - the real books and numbers kind, not the spicy kind. Three years into my accounting career I realized that it was not what I wanted to be doing for the rest of my life. So, I decided to take some time off to "find my passion" - I guess you could say. I had nothing planned, and dabbled in a few different things, yet somehow I ended up in the adult industry, and then from there things just spiraled in the most amazingly unexpected ways.

About a year into my adult industry career I started a podcast with my peer and close friend Markus Wolf called The Kat & Mark Show. We were then given the honor of co-hosting the Australian Adult Industry Awards that took place in Melbourne a few months ago. It was from that hosting opportunity that I met American photographer Miles Long, who is an affiliate of the Centrefold Talent Agency. This connection opened up so many doors and catapulted me into the world of modeling. I've dreamt of being a Playboy Playmate ever since I first watched The Girls Next Door, but I never did I think this would ever be a reality! I'm so honored to be a part of the Playboy Family.

Having a full schedule must make it difficult for you to get much alone time, talk to us about the top 3 must-dos to ensure you fit in some well-deserved downtime. When you run multiple businesses, there is no time off unless you purposely make time for it. In my prior career as an accountant, there were times when there were no days off for months, so I learned the hard way how much burnout can significantly impact your productivity. Eventually, it just turns into negative returns. So, I make sure to always listen to my body and if I'm starting to feel overwhelmed or overworked then I will take a day off to recharge whenever it's needed. It's so important to never feel guilty about days off because they are so necessary to recharge the batteries and make sure you can show up at 100%. I also plan holidays a couple of times a year where I do no work at all. In my normal day-to-day, even on days off, there is usually always a little bit of work to do. But I keep my vacations completely work-free! Sometimes a digital detox is just so necessary. Lastly, I make time for friends and family as often as I can. I've seen a lot of successful people let their work impact their relationships or social time. Sometimes it is hard to find social time, but it really is so necessary to maintain a good support network around you. Especially when you're a sole trader and don't necessarily have 'colleagues' to turn to.

What does it mean for you to be seen as a strong, intelligent, ambitious woman? It's very important to me. I was raised with the notion that the only way to be all of these things was to go to university and get a professional job. This is a common thought in society, especially among the older generations. Moving from a professional job into the adult industry, I can now definitely say that I have found tremendously more drive, purpose, and success in my career in the adult industry than I ever could have in my corporate career. Being seen as all of these things is important to me because it shows that you don't need the traditional corporate job to have these qualities. These are inner qualities that a woman can possess regardless of whatever job it is that she chooses to do.

What are some of the biggest misconceptions people have about what you do? People who work in the adult industry are often not taken very seriously. We face a lot of discrimination about our

character, our work, and our lives. People often see us as not having "real jobs", when the reality couldn't be further from the truth. Not only is it real work, but it's hard work. It can pay just as well and be just as glamorous as any other job, but it is by no means easy money as many people think. We are a community full of businesswomen and businessmen, and we are all really just regular people with regular lives, which seems to shock a lot of people *laughs* but we all do and enjoy normal human things just as much as anyone else!

What does freedom of self-expression mean to you? It means being able to express myself and my body freely. I think having avenues for people to express who they are is so important for one's development and to ensure our identity is not lost in a time where so much importance is placed on what is online or what is "trending". However, in today's society, there is so much that is censored. Us who work in the adult industry know this all too well, as the adult industry and its patrons are so frequently censored through account bans and shadow banning. This makes it hard for us to express ourselves "freely" but we all try to do our best with what we can.

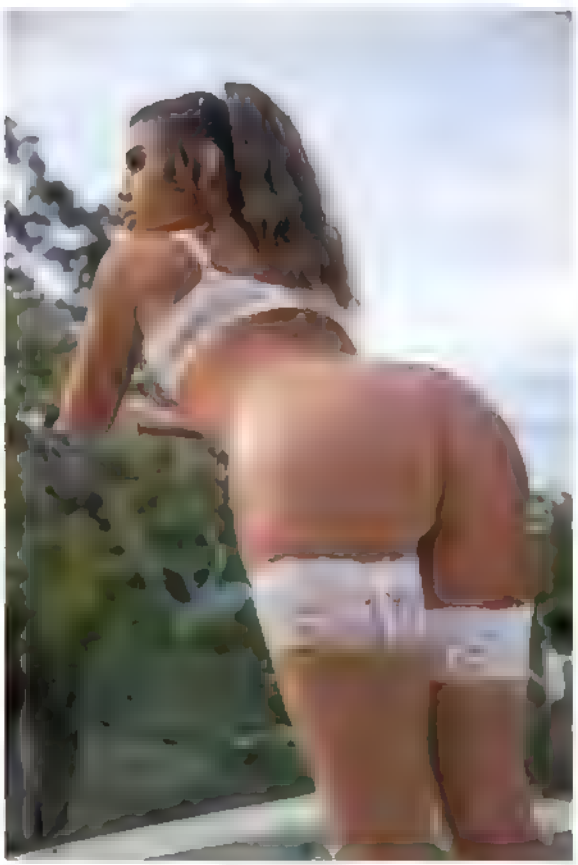
We absolutely love your Instagram, your content is very dynamic, inspirational, and downright sexy, could you perhaps tell us what your personal experience as an influencer has been like? It's been super hard *laughs* because I definitely don't think I was built for social media. I'm showing my age a little bit here, but I was already an adult when smartphones and most of the modern social media apps came out, which are totally different from the social media I was using as a teenager (MySpace, MSN, Bebo). So, I'm not going to lie, keeping up with the times has been challenging for me *laughs* but I get better every day!

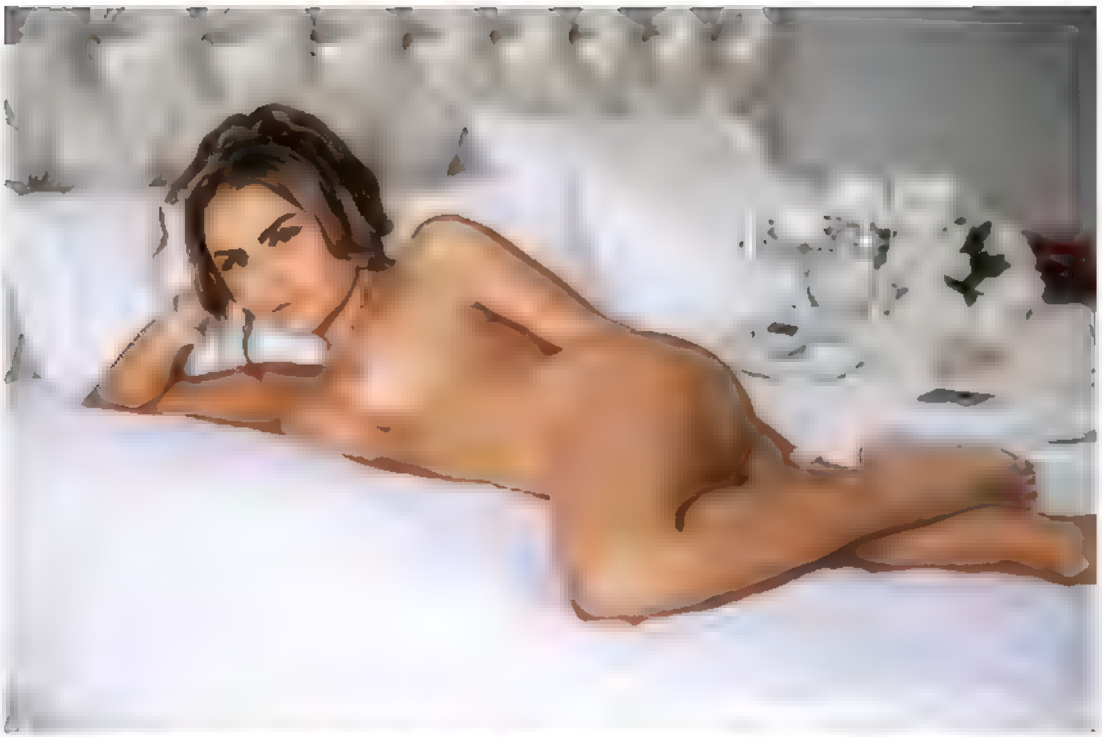
3 things that you can't go a day without. Firstly, exercising. I work out every day and just feel so sluggish if I don't. Second, coffee. I am not a nice person until I've had my cold drip coffee in the morning *laughs* I'm such a coffee snob so if it's not my favorite kind of coffee in the morning then that's enough to ruin my day *laughs*. Lastly, I hate to say it, but my phone... Not because I feel like I need my phone for me, but because 100% of my business is done through my phone, so my business would be lost without it!

What about those crazy DMs you must receive? Care to share a few funny stories regarding those? Honestly, nothing too crazy – yet! Mostly just men, and spam *laughs*

Now we're sure you experience a lot of male attention on and offline, any advice you would like to give to men out there who are hoping to catch your eye the right way? I'm a sucker for a funny guy! I'm the kind of girl who would date a Pete Davidson *laughs* Also anyone who is gentlemanly and chivalrous. I think chivalry has become so lost these days, so if a guy does things like open doors for me or pulls out my chair, even just little things like that then I definitely notice it.

What is the absolute worst thing a man can do to completely put you off? Being gentlemanly and chivalrous towards me is one thing, but I will always look to see how a guy treats the people around us. I was once seeing this guy. He was so charming, such a gentleman - a really amazing guy. Then one night we went out and he was incredibly rude to the Uber driver, and then to multiple waiters at the restaurant. I was instantly turned off him, even though he treated me wonderfully. If a guy is nice to me, but not to everyone else, then he isn't a nice guy. Instant turn-off!





That said, what advice would you have to give to all women out there when it comes to love and relationships? I'm probably the worst person to ask because I've been single for like 6 years *laughs* but what I will say is that I think it's important not to place your sense of self-worth or identity on being in a relationship. I've had long-term relationships in the past, so I know that being single can be just as fulfilling as being in a relationship. If I had been in a relationship the past few years, then my life may not have turned out the way it did. So I definitely don't think I've missed out on anything because being single took me down this path and I'm so thankful for that!

I think the best thing is to work on yourself and your passion, find your own self-fulfillment, and then with love just trust in the process that someone will come along when you least expect it - That's what my dad always told me and I definitely think that it's true!

Thank you so much for sitting down with us and letting us get to know you! Any last words for our readers out there? Thanks so much for having me. You can find me on Instagram @katja.cortez and definitely be sure to check out my podcast The Kat & Mark Show - @katandmarkshow - everywhere you get your podcasts

Playboy Interview

Jay-Z

A candid conversation with rap's leading man about feuding with Nas, growing up with Biggie, dating Beyonce and learning that God loves a drug dealer

INTERVIEW BY **ROB TANNENBAUM** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **DAVID ROSE**

Here's a story about Jay-Z. One recent night he was gambling with Kevin Liles, president of Def Jam, the label that distributes Jay-Z's records. When the bets were finished, Liles was down $10,000. The next day he gave $10,000 cash to a messenger and sent it to the studio where Jay-Z was working. The rapper refused the money and sent the messenger back with these words: "Tell Kevin he's got to deliver it himself."

Jay-Z plays for big stakes and insists on honor. When he prevails, he doesn't hesitate to gloat or talk trash. His favorite basketball player is Michael Jordan and, like Jordan, he savors competition as much as victory.

This story affirms the self-portrait that he draws in hits like "Big Pimpin'," "H to the Izzo" and "Girls, Girls, Girls": He's the Don Corleone of rap ("Young Vito" is one of his many nicknames), a street-hardened former drug dealer who drinks Cristal, smokes cigars and trusts almost no one. Especially women. In a music genre where arrogance is expected, he's set a new standard, calling himself Jay-Hova, god of the microphone. Bill O'Reilly has accused him of damaging children with cursing and "corrosive lyrics." Appearing on a Missy Elliott record last year, Jay-Z offered a terse reply. "Fuck Bill O'Reilly."

He was born Shawn Corey Carter, the youngest of four children, and grew up in the notoriously bleak Brooklyn public housing complex known as Marcy Projects. His father left the family when Shawn was 11, the kids were raised by their mom, Gloria, and by the streets, not always in that order.

Reasonable Doubt, released in 1996 and widely recognized as a classic, made Jay-Z an underground legend, bragging that he'd "sold it all, from crack to opium" (apparently true) and had made "underworld ties" (apparently not). In "You Must Love Me," he examines the memory of shooting his brother when he was 12 (his brother survived).

Then came his breakthrough, "Hard Knock Life," a 1998 single that sampled a chorus from the Broadway musical Annie. Jay-Z was no longer known only to rap devotees. As he said, he "brought the suburbs to the hood." And he continued to dispute the perception that he was one more remorseless street thug draped in gold. "Motherfuckers say that I'm foolish, I only talk about jewels," he intoned. "Do you fools listen to music, or do you just skim through it?"

Though it now seems like a smart business decision to form his own record label, Roc-A-Fella, Jay-Z started the company with two friends only because no label would sign him. From necessity came fortune. The company has diversified into Rocawear, a thriving clothing company, and Roc-A-Fella Films. His label has signed a new generation of rappers, including Cam'ron, Memphis Bleek and Beanie Sigel, all of whom Jay-Z promotes on his own records.

Recording at the unusual pace of one or sometimes two records each year, Jay-Z, 32, has made nine albums since 1996. And he's endured shifting trends in a way no other rapper has. Released in November 2002, The Blueprint 2: The Gift and the Curse is a double CD that stretches to include R&B, dancehall, rock and a duet with Beyoncé Knowles. It was his fifth album to debut at number one on the pop charts, an accomplishment unmatched by any other rapper. With more than 16 million records sold, he trails only Eminem as rap's top seller. Shortly after Blueprint 2 was released, we sent writer Rob Tannenbaum to interview Jay-Z in New York City.

PLAYBOY: Rap careers are usually over fast, one or two hits, then styles change and a new guy comes along. Why have you endured while other rappers haven't?

JAY-Z: I would say that it's from still being able to relate to people. It's natural to lose yourself when you have success, to start surrounding yourself with fake people. In The 48 Laws of Power, it says the worst thing you can do is build a fortress around yourself. I still got the people who grew up with me, my cousin and my childhood friends. This guy right here (gestures to the studio manager), he's my friend, and he told me that one of my records, Volume Three, was wack. People set higher standards for me, and I love it.

PLAYBOY: But we were just in a chauffeured car, on our way to free courtside seats at a Nets game, and we saw your new music video playing on BET.

JAY-Z: Yeah. (Laughs) I'm still separated. You told me to separate—I'm still looking in on that guy. Like, Wow, that guy's doing it!

PLAYBOY: So how can people relate to you when you possess so many things they don't have?

JAY-Z: I've been through a lot of things, so I could write songs off memory for another four years. Since my first album, it was like, Wow, that guy's really hitting it on the head about life in the streets. Now people are growing with me, and they're seeing the integrity is real. A guy came up to me at the gym the other day and told me, "I know you now." I just rhyme about what I've been through.

PLAYBOY: Roc-A-Fella has grossed an estimated $300 million.

JAY-Z: Wow!

PLAYBOY: How much of that has ended up in your pocket?

JAY-Z: (Smiles) I've got about $5,000 on me now, I do. That's just the leftovers for me. I went to Miami two weeks ago, and we gambled on the plane. I won a little bit of money, and I still got it in my pocket.

PLAYBOY: How much do you usually bet?

JAY-Z: That night I won about $17,000 from my friends.

PLAYBOY: You take money from friends?

JAY-Z: Yeah. It's gambling! They take mine too. They don't give me a walk. They don't say sorry. Actually, they laugh. Then they go buy shit. A friend who won recently paged me the next day: "I just bought a plasma TV. Thank y'all!"

PLAYBOY: I hear your best game is guts. What's that?

JAY-Z: It's like a three-card poker game. I taught Will Smith to play guts. Now he has guts tournaments. I don't know if he wants people to know that. I talk too much. What if Will Smith gets hooked on gambling? He's clean-cut, he can't gamble. I can gamble because I'm from the hood (makes a mean face). We're having a guts game this Thursday. We're trying to get Michael Jordan to come. Can I say that too? Damn, I'm telling everybody's business. God, I just told on Will Smith and Michael Jordan, huh?

PLAYBOY: You refer to yourself as "the $40 million boy" on Blueprint 2. Is that an accurate number?

JAY-Z: I don't know the math. How'd I get that number? I might be past that by now.

PLAYBOY: We bet you know exactly how much you have at any given moment.

JAY-Z: Everyone should, don't you think? Especially in rap music. There's nothing worse than putting in all this work and waking up broke. I've seen it happen, and I vowed it won't happen to me.

PLAYBOY: Jam Master Jay of Run-D.M.C. died broke. How does that happen?

JAY-Z: I always have to blame it on the accountants. They have to be tough, they have to be willing to quit if a guy calls up and says, "I want to buy a new car."

PLAYBOY: Have any of your accountants ever said no to you?

JAY-Z: I fire my accountant every year. Every time I pay taxes, he's fired. Uncle Sam did not go in that recording booth with me. He didn't bang his head against the wall until he came up with the hook for "Hovi Baby." It's crazy, the checks that I send to the government, for nothing. And then my accountant says, "Be happy that you're fortunate enough to cut this check." Oh yeah? Fuck you! You're fucking fired! That's my response. Then I hire him back, because he's right.

PLAYBOY: When you named the label Roc-A-Fella, did you know anything about the Rockefeller family?

JAY-Z: I just knew they was millionaires. That was the part that stuck.

PLAYBOY: All that money, and you still release records more often than any other rapper. Why work so hard? Is it just for the money?

JAY-Z: I'm doing it for the artistry. I'm doing it to try new things, to create, to invent. I'm a guy who wants to see rap go further, even after me. I want people to open their minds, start making different types of music. Don't follow what's going on. That's what hip-hop is about. It's a rebellious voice. You're going left? Then I'm going right. But say it like this: (Sneers) I'm going right.

PLAYBOY: How did growing up in the Marcy Projects shape you?

JAY-Z: It was a poor neighborhood, but you learned loyalty and integrity. You learned to respect other people, because it was a minefield. If you disrespect somebody, or act dishonorable, you get hurt. Somebody puts you in your place. So I learned integrity. It's a beautiful place to grow up, as far as having honor.

PLAYBOY: Was it dangerous?

JAY-Z: It wasn't safe. Everyone there was poor and trying to get ahead. There was not much hope. You put all those ingredients together, you have people who are willing to do anything at any time.

What am I going to do, lose my life? What is my life worth, anyway? That can't be a safe environment. In each of the buildings, there's six floors, four families on each floor, three buildings connected together. Everyone's on top of everybody else. That's a powder keg. Then crack hit around 1985. You had so many people strung out. I mean, everybody. It was an epidemic.

PLAYBOY: And have those projects changed since you were a kid?

JAY-Z: (Shakes his head) There's no lawyers, no doctors, no psychiatrists. Everyone that makes money moves out. They just go. I want to tell kids, "Yo, I'm Jay-Z...." Not even Jay-Z. "I'm Shawn Carter, from 5C. I lived in that building right there, the one you live in now. And it can happen for you. I don't know what it is that you want to do, but something will happen for you."

PLAYBOY: Like you, most of the kids you grew up with didn't have fathers.

JAY-Z: I could name the ones who did (laughs). There were about three in the whole project.

PLAYBOY: Your dad split when you were 11. What happens when a boy grows up without a dad?

JAY-Z: He learns how to be a man in the streets. Everyone needs that role model, that blueprint, to guide you through. Depending on your environment, it could be a bad thing.

PLAYBOY: You've talked about your dad in a few songs, especially "Where Have You Been?"

JAY-Z: In hindsight, I was hard on the guy in a lot of songs. At that time, everyone was leaving. They was leaving before the kid was born. He wasn't totally a scumbag—not totally. After those songs, I told my mom I wanted to talk to him. I can't keep living in the past. My mom got in touch with him. The first time he was supposed to come to my house, he didn't come. I figured it was embarrassing for him, going to his son's house. I got mad again. Like, "All right, forget it, then! I ain't reaching out no more!" Then my mom told me he was finally ready to come over, and we just kicked it—I told him everything that was on my mind. And we shook hands, like men.

PLAYBOY: Is he a dad to you now?

JAY-Z: I don't think anyone can be a dad to me at this point. I learned how to go inside my own mind, to figure it out, to learn as I go along.

PLAYBOY: You went to high school with the Notorious B.I.G. How did you end up recording together?

JAY-Z: We always said we was going to do something together, and I was doing my first album, so we went into the studio and did "Brooklyn's Finest." He was sitting there, trying to memorize his lyrics, and I passed him a pen and paper, like, "Here." And he was like, "No, I'm cool, you can take that." I was like, "Nah, I don't need that." That's so strange, to see two people who don't write down lyrics. At the time, no one else was doing that. After that, we spoke every day.

PLAYBOY: Who do you think killed Biggie?

JAY-Z: I don't know, man. I have no idea. (Pause) I don't want to further that. I don't want to talk about what I think.

PLAYBOY: Did Biggie's death, and Tupac's, make you more cautious about starting beefs with people?

JAY-Z: No, because I don't believe either one of them got killed over rap music. That was just something to help the media sell magazines.

PLAYBOY: They were both rappers. They both got shot. So obviously they pissed off someone.

JAY-Z: Not rapping.

PLAYBOY: What did you think of the Los Angeles Times story last year that said Biggie paid gang members to kill Tupac?

JAY-Z: That was just irresponsible-journalism bullshit. It's terrible to throw dirt on a guy's name who's not here. If it would have been about a politician, or somebody else powerful, there would be lawsuits. There would be hell to pay. It's a lack of respect when they deal with rappers.

PLAYBOY: The guy who has cornered the market on disrespecting rap music is Bill O'Reilly.

JAY-Z: He's just doing shock TV. Now he knows, "Oh shit, the power of hip-hop—if I say something about them, my ratings go right up."

PLAYBOY: Would you ever go on his show and explain your point of view?

JAY-Z: Why? He don't care. He's doing what he do—he's feeding his family. It's not about his understanding. I don't believe he wants to understand. It's obvious he's not researching the truth.

PLAYBOY: What's left for you to do that you haven't already?

JAY-Z: Have kids. And run Universal Records. Not black music, either—I got to run the whole ship. I'll make it cool to be different. Don't sound like everybody else—we don't even accept that. I get joy just sharing my knowledge with artists, like a guru. Put the love back in music. Make a record you know will be somebody's song, will mark somebody's life. Don't sell records—make music.

PLAYBOY: Universal is the biggest record company in the country. It would be hard to run the label while you're a rapper.

JAY-Z: That's what I'm saying. Next album is my last album. I'm freeing up my time. The next one's coming with a book, so you know it's the end.

PLAYBOY: You say that you're going to record only one more album, but you have been talking about retiring since your first record.

JAY-Z: You don't understand. When I said Reasonable Doubt was going to be my first and only album, I meant it. "He made one album, then, puff, he's gone with the wind." But now I really mean it. Write the book, release the Black Album, go head Universal.

PLAYBOY: And maybe do a guest spot on other people's records?

JAY-Z: Not a guest spot at 50. That's disrespectful. That's just embarrassing.

PLAYBOY: You can't be a rapper at 50?

JAY-Z: No, forget it. Just a guru.

PLAYBOY: What's the Black Album?

JAY-Z: It's my last album. I want it to be the prequel to Reasonable Doubt. I want my mother to open it, then I go through my life and end saying how I want to do "Ain't No Nigga," which is my first hit,

> "I'm trying to get grown up and not talk about figures anymore. I'm learning that the big cats don't talk about money, only us ignorant rappers. I have to get sophisticated with my paper. I'm not nouveau money."

and trying to find a beat for it. "I keep it fresher than the next bitch" (the first line of "Ain't No Nigga"). Then it ends. I want it to come out on November 28—Black Friday. Then, no more albums.

PLAYBOY: You're a betting man, right?

JAY-Z: Mmm-hmm.

PLAYBOY: Here's a bet: We've got $20 that says your next record isn't the last.

JAY-Z: And if I make more than one album, I give it back?

PLAYBOY: No, you're giving us odds of 50-1. If you lose, you pay us $1,000.

JAY-Z: That's a great bet. That's a wonderful bet. (Grabs the money, puts it in his pocket) I just got $20! And I'm gonna keep it too.

PLAYBOY: Fine, but we'll get our money in about 18 months, after you've made two more records.

JAY-Z: Ya-ha-ha! That's a great bet, for you. I would take that bet, too, if it was switched. It's on tape too. My integrity is legendary—I would never fuck you out of $20. If there's a discrepancy, I'll give it to you just so it won't be on our minds.

PLAYBOY: Only one rapper has sold more records than you, Eminem. Is that because he's white?

JAY-Z: He's an extraordinary talent. He's a genius, bottom line. But race has something to do with it. If you listen to his record White America, he addresses that topic.

PLAYBOY: He says if he were black, he'd have sold half as many records.

JAY-Z: Right. It might be less than that (laughs).

PLAYBOY: So who are your peers? Who do you compete with?

JAY-Z: There was one person, B.g. If I heard "Who Shot Ya?" in a club, I would leave and go make some music. That's not to take anything away from Eminem or Nas, I just don't look at them as that.

PLAYBOY: It's like when Michael Jordan had Magic Johnson.

JAY-Z: Right. I heard Jordan say, when Magic had AIDS, he felt like he was cheating him, "You leaving now? Yo, I need you. You're going to define my greatness." It was selfish.

PLAYBOY: Then Jordan got bored and retired, like you're threatening to do.

JAY-Z: See that? You just lost $20.

PLAYBOY: No, because guess who's playing basketball tonight? Michael Jordan.

JAY-Z: You know why you lose again? Because Jordan stayed a year too much. I wanna cry for him. Fuck!

PLAYBOY: How's the rap game going to survive without you?

JAY-Z: Hey, man, it had better find a way. It existed before me, and I'm sure it will exist after me.

PLAYBOY: Rap appears simple because it's just rhyming—but you need a lot more words and ideas in rap than you do in a pop song.

JAY-Z: That's true. I mean, I wrote a couple of pop songs for Mya. I just started doing that. And it's so easy. Repeat the words over again? And again? They repeat not only the choruses, they repeat the verses too!

PLAYBOY: Can you sing?

JAY-Z: I can sing bad.

PLAYBOY: At the Nets game, you sang whatever song that came on, from Eminem to Whitney Houston. And you knew all the words.

JAY-Z: Yeah, I know a lot of songs. I store them. I'm an iPod. The human iPod.

PLAYBOY: Something else that's new on Blueprint 2—your mistrust of women has softened.

JAY-Z: Right. People already know my paranoia about women. Before I was a rapper who didn't know who his friends were, I was a hustler who didn't know who his friends were. When it's a song about women, it's usually the single, which makes people say, "This guy is dissing women on every fucking record." (Laughs) "Big Pimpin'," "Can I Get a Fuck You," those are the hits. But the slower ones are usually more meaningful and serious.

PLAYBOY: Do you think women are less trustworthy than men?

JAY-Z: No. But guys don't want to date me for my money, so I don't have to worry about them.

PLAYBOY: If you're going to have kids, you have to get over that paranoia.

JAY-Z: Yeah, I'm learning, I'm growing, I'm growing slow.

PLAYBOY: You tell a story in "This Can't Be Life," that you were almost a father. True story?

JAY-Z: Yeah. The girl I was seeing about four years ago had a miscarriage. But I wasn't sad. I didn't even grieve. Maybe it happened because I wasn't ready to be a dad.

PLAYBOY: And now you're dating a woman who doesn't need your money, either.

JAY-Z: Is that right?

PLAYBOY: How did you meet Beyoncé Knowles?

JAY-Z: I used to see her all the time. (Quickly) We're not engaged or anything, by the way. We're just cool. We're just friends. We don't really, ah, know each other like that yet.

PLAYBOY: Just friends, like the way you and Memphis Bleek are just friends?

JAY-Z: No, Beyoncé's a woman. A very attractive woman. But we're friends for now. Me and Bleek, we're tighter. I took him from the projects—I'm from 5C, he's from 3C. He's been with me since 1994. Between Beyoncé and him? Beyonce's got to go (laughs).

PLAYBOY: Do you wish that she was your girlfriend?

JAY-Z: She's beautiful. Who wouldn't wish she was their girlfriend? Maybe one day (smiles).

PLAYBOY: We're not quite convinced. We know you like to keep parts of your life private. If she were your girlfriend, would you tell us?

JAY-Z: Probably not.

PLAYBOY: Well, you're pretty cool—hard to read at times.

JAY-Z: Thank you, brother. (Raises a glass of Cristal) Toast to that.

PLAYBOY: Does that create problems in relationships?

JAY-Z: Yeah, it could. I'm not the most I-love-you guy. That's one of my problems. "What, you want me to tell you? Those are just

> "A lot of people look at me like they looked at Martin Luther King. I'm not a saint—I did bad things. I fucked up. I try not to do bad things anymore. I try to be a decent citizen."

words—everyone is going to tell you. Look at what I do." I have to change that.

PLAYBOY: How are you going to change that?

JAY-Z: I know it. That's half the battle.

PLAYBOY: But only half.

JAY-Z: But half! Shit. It was zero before—be happy.

PLAYBOY: If we were going to play amateur psychiatrist—

JAY-Z: That's what this feels like.

PLAYBOY: Here's what we would say: As a kid, you loved your dad. But he left and you felt rejected, and that hurt so much, you don't want to love anyone else the same way.

JAY-Z: Definitely. That could be 100 percent true. There's no worse pain. That's why a lot of things didn't affect me growing up.

PLAYBOY: For instance, you had a fight with your own brother, when you were 12, and shot him. He lived, but it was an intense experience.

JAY-Z: Yeah. (Pause) You know what? Let's not. I'll tell you that one day, you as a person. Does he have to relive it every time someone talks to me about it? Is that fair to him?

PLAYBOY: Where did you get the gun?

JAY-Z: That story's even worse. I was 12. I didn't know better. The person who gave me the gun had to be 20 or 21—you're an adult. Damn, why would you do that? How could you even ... I don't understand. But I can't blame nobody but myself.

PLAYBOY: Someone gave you a gun so you could shoot your brother?

JAY-Z: (Pauses) Yeah. Terrible. That's the one thing to this day I regret.

PLAYBOY: Why did you shoot him?

JAY-Z: My brother was a really, really, really tough person to get along with. He was messed up on drugs really bad.

PLAYBOY: Did he forgive you?

JAY-Z: Oh, right away, and that made it worse.

PLAYBOY: Then a few years later, when you were selling drugs, someone shot at you three times on the street.

JAY-Z: It was a little bit farther than me to you.

PLAYBOY: Who shot at you?

JAY-Z: I ain't going into that. I know who it was. He was a friend of mine. It was a misunderstanding. We've talked about it and laughed.

PLAYBOY: On "Dead Presidents II," you talk about being shot at and say it was "divine intervention" you weren't killed. Do you think God protects drug dealers?

JAY-Z: I think God protects anyone with a good heart. People say, "That's a comfort blanket so you can do whatever the fuck you want." But my intention was good. I was in a place where there's no hope. It was like, Fuck, man, I ain't going to continue to live like this. I've got to do something. Then I got addicted to that life. It was fun. It helped my situation, helped everyone around me.

PLAYBOY: So how much money did you make back then?

JAY-Z: I don't know the dollar amount.

PLAYBOY: Two grand a week? Ten grand a week?

JAY-Z: I did well.

PLAYBOY: When you were dealing, did you use drugs?

JAY-Z: No. Never. I'd seen my brother. After my father, that was the next person I looked up to. He had all the girls, he played basketball. Then he was a whole different person.

PLAYBOY: We've heard you only recently started smoking pot.

JAY-Z: (*Laughs*) There would be 10 of us, out in the Hamptons, and we won't finish one joint. "Ooh, we high!" "That's too strong! Put that out!" I don't smoke pot no more.

PLAYBOY: From listening to your songs, people might believe that you're always drinking—

JAY-Z: Cristal at 10 in the morning, right. Although I was drinking champagne and eating caviar this afternoon.

PLAYBOY: Where?

JAY-Z: I went shopping today, at Jacob the Jeweler. Had champagne and Beluga caviar.

PLAYBOY: Were you buying a present for Beyoncé?

JAY-Z: Ha-ha. No.

PLAYBOY: Honestly?

JAY-Z: I wouldn't tell you honestly.

PLAYBOY: You frequently mention Cristal in your songs. Are you a connoisseur? Would you know it if you ordered Cristal, and someone brought you—

JAY-Z: Tattinger? Yeah, I would know right away.

PLAYBOY: We heard you have a wrist-watch worth so much money, you won't wear it outside your house.

JAY-Z: What kind of silly shit is that? Then why would I buy it? I got a one-of-one, an Audemars Piguet. There's no other watch like it in the world. It's like a piece of art.

PLAYBOY: How much did it cost?

JAY-Z: A little bit. I'm trying to get grown up and not talk about figures anymore. I'm learning that the big cats don't talk about money, only us ignorant rappers. I have to get sophisticated with my paper. I'm not nouveau money.

PLAYBOY: We should have interviewed you a few years ago, huh?

JAY-Z: I would've gave it to you. You'd have known how much money I have right now. You'd know Roc-A-Fella was $400 million instead of $300 million—I'm not saying it, though.

PLAYBOY: You just did!

JAY-Z: I tried. Old habits are hard to break (laughs). And you got me drinking this goddamn Cristal.

PLAYBOY: Let's talk about sex. Which have you done more often, turned down sex or accepted it?

JAY-Z: I think every artist has turned it down more. I hope. Shit (*laughs*). If the place is filled with 20,000 people, 10,000 of them are screaming women. I never got carried away. I have always been a person who's more interested in business first.

PLAYBOY: If there's a beautiful woman on one side of the room, and a business deal on the other—

JAY-Z: I'd take the business deal. Sorry. I know people will be like, "You fucking asshole! You dummy!"

PLAYBOY: You rapped with Eminem and DMX and Biggie, all of

> "'I'm from the hood.' It's a joke. You can't take that seriously. Rappers, we ain't from the hood. We got nice homes and nice cars. We from the mansion."

whom are highly respected. You also rapped with Puff Daddy and Ja Rule, who aren't respected. Does it make a difference to you who you rap with?

JAY-Z: I rap with people for different reasons. Sometimes I like them, sometimes I respect them. I was on a Juvenile remix because I liked this record he had, called Ha. He did something new. So I called him and said that I would love to do the remix.

PLAYBOY: So why rap with Puffy?

JAY-Z: I respect Puff on a creative level. As a rapper, you ain't got to respect him. As a producer, he gave "Juicy" to Biggie. Biggie didn't want to do it. (The song made Biggie a star.) "That beat is soft. I ain't doing that." As a rapper, I can't say I want to hear him. He's not a rapper.

PLAYBOY: Do you want to follow Puffy into movies?

JAY-Z: I do. I have a bunch of scripts, from Wesley Snipes, Denzel. Chris Rock said, "Boy, you better take these movies. There ain't no telling if you're going to be hot tomorrow."

PLAYBOY: How about female rappers? Years ago, you had Queen Latifah, MC Lyte. Now all the top female rappers—Foxy Brown, Lil' Kim—have to be sexy and trashy, wearing fur bikinis. Why is that?

JAY-Z: Maybe it's because rap is so angry. "Breakin' off on a motherfucker like that!" A girl don't have no street credibility. You don't believe a girl when she's saying, "I'm holding a gat to the motherfucker."

PLAYBOY: Especially if she's wearing a fur bikini when she says it.

JAY-Z: (Laughs) You're like, You can't run fast in those stilettos.

PLAYBOY: Last year you made a record with R. Kelly, Best of Both Worlds. Just before it came out, he was arrested on 21 counts of child pornography, over a videotape that seems to show him having sex with an underage girl. The music video you were going to make was canceled, the tour was canceled, the record didn't sell. Was that your biggest disappointment in music?

JAY-Z: I would say so. I had such high expectations for it. I made the album with somebody I think is the greatest writer of our time. And we didn't finish the story, with the videos and performing.

PLAYBOY: How did you find out about the charges against him?

JAY-Z: People were talking about it before the album. Damn, why didn't nobody tell me? It seems like this was a known fact for a while, and people just started telling me a week before the album dropped. "You didn't know?" Then it finally hit the news.

PLAYBOY: A lot of counts of child pornography. Do you think that Kelly's career is over?

JAY-Z: I have no idea. It's going to be really tough.

PLAYBOY: Do you think that he might be guilty?

JAY-Z: I don't want to speculate, man. I don't know what half of America is doing behind closed doors. When it's an entertainer, it's headline news. It ain't the first time it happened. Look at fucking Elvis, man. How old was Priscilla when he married her? Eleven?

PLAYBOY: And when Kelly married Aaliyah, she was 15. Doesn't that indicate a sexual interest in underage women?

JAY-Z: I miss Aaliyah. I hate that her name is even involved in these kinds of conversations.

PLAYBOY: You've said before that rap is like wrestling. What do you mean?

JAY-Z: When I say that, I'm talking about all the beefs going on. Everybody is from a place where they had nothing. Now they're getting a little bit of something—they're not going to risk that over "I rhyme better than you." All that muscling up, all that sticking out your chest, it's all wrestling. "Come here, boy!" Nobody is gonna do nothing to nobody. It's all just a show.

PLAYBOY: Just hype?

JAY-Z: There you go. A lot of attention to your record.

PLAYBOY: And yet rappers are always saying, "I'm keepin' it real."

JAY-Z: Someone recently told me, "Real is just a foundation for a great fantasy." That's deep.

PLAYBOY: You've had a big battle with Nas—he made a song about you, you made a song about him, back and forth. If it was just wrestling, does that mean you never got mad?

JAY-Z: You get angry, but at the end of the day, I'm not going to do nothing. It just pushes you to make better records. I got mad and went into the studio.

PLAYBOY: Which got you angrier: When he called you ugly or when he implied you're gay?

JAY-Z: Ugly? A guy's not supposed to judge another guy. So that didn't bother me. But there's an imaginary line in the sand, and most people cross it when they are off balance. You don't say things about another guy's genitalia.

PLAYBOY: He said that you should suck his dick.

JAY-Z: Yeah. You can't say that to a man. It's like when you have nothing else to grab on to and you say, "Fuck you! Your mother!" I take comfort from that. I dropped some heavy records, and he was a little off balance.

PLAYBOY: You offered to settle the fight in a boxing ring. Was

there ever a chance that would happen?

JAY-Z: No, too much to lose. Especially in rap. People get knocked out, they lose that image. When you're listening to a record, "I'm the illest!" I don't know, man, I just saw you get knocked out (laughs). I hear what you're saying, but my eyes are seeing something different. I would have boxed him.

PLAYBOY: How do you know you would have won?

JAY-Z: My will. My will alone. I'm too strong, man.

PLAYBOY: Blueprint 2 is a double album. What's next, a triple album?

JAY-Z: Never. That was too much music. Eminem said, "Yo, I love the album, man. I ain't finished listening to it. But I'm gonna get to it."

PLAYBOY: On "The Ruler's Back," you liken yourself to Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks.

JAY-Z: What did I say?

PLAYBOY: We have to tell you? You've written so many songs, you can't remember your own lyrics?

JAY-Z: Word up. Friends have to tell me my rhymes all the time.

PLAYBOY: "I'm representing…"

JAY-Z: "I'm representin' for the seat where Rosa Parks sat/Where Malcolm X was shot, where Martin Luther was popped." Yeah. I believe that every black person has a responsibility. When you do good, everyone is looking at you—every black person. So you're the same person as Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. I'm not just representing the hood and Roc-A-Fella Records, I'm representing for the whole culture. A lot of people look at me like they looked at Martin Luther King.

PLAYBOY: Some people might say, "What's a rapper who used to deal drugs doing comparing himself to Dr. King?"

JAY-Z: I'm not like a politician who says he never did nothing wrong. I'm not a saint—I did bad things. I fucked up. But I'm a very legit person. I try not to do bad things anymore. I try to be a decent citizen.

PLAYBOY: But you're not always so levelheaded and orderly. In December 1999 you were arrested for stabbing Lance "Un" Rivera in a nightclub and pleaded guilty to misdemeanor assault. What happened that night?

JAY-Z: A fight got out of hand.

PLAYBOY: The rumor was, you were mad because he was bootlegging your music.

JAY-Z: That doesn't make sense. My stuff gets bootlegged every year. It had nothing to do with bootlegging.

PLAYBOY: If the story's been told wrong, set the record straight.

JAY-Z: No. There's a lot of stories being told wrong. I can't correct every story. Me and Un, we talk—we're not cool, but we're not mad.

PLAYBOY: Why did you have a knife on you that night?

JAY-Z: I don't want to talk about the knives. Just leave that one alone.

PLAYBOY: Let's put it this way: At any given time, do you have protection on you?

JAY-Z: No. One time I heard Russell Simmons say, "I don't even want to see a gun. I don't want no friends with guns." I was like, He's crazy. But now I feel the same way. What's wrong with me? I'm a gangsta rapper. (Makes a mean face) From the hood.

PLAYBOY: But a few months after the stabbing, you were arrested again because your bodyguard was found with an unlicensed Glock semiautomatic.

JAY-Z: I'm seldom with a bodyguard. I like to go and come as I please. I go to games by myself all the time. But if I'm going to be in a partylike atmosphere, where there's a bunch of people? Yeah, definitely, 100 percent. Like Michael Jackson or Britney Spears would.

PLAYBOY: If he had the gun, why were you charged? I don't understand.

JAY-Z: Me, neither. I didn't have a gun. I was in a limousine with a partition. The partition was up. I don't know what's going on in the front. But I'm thinking, All right, he's going to straighten it out. I was joking around with the cop. I was laughing. Then the cop was like, Turn around, put your hands behind your back. I wasn't laughing no more. They said they charged me because it was my car. Took my fingerprints and a picture. I understood it later. It was just for the media. The DA has a publicist who came down to the station house. That was all about imaging.

PLAYBOY: From your first album to the last, you use the word fag a lot. Are you homophobic?

JAY-Z: Um, I think rap is homophobic. I don't know. I could be. My friends and I play a game called Pause—if you say something that sounds gay, like, "I was with the dude the other day," you have to say, "Pause." That could be viewed as homophobic. I stopped playing Pause this year—I'm too grown. So maybe I'm getting better.

PLAYBOY: But not playing Pause doesn't mean you're no longer homophobic.

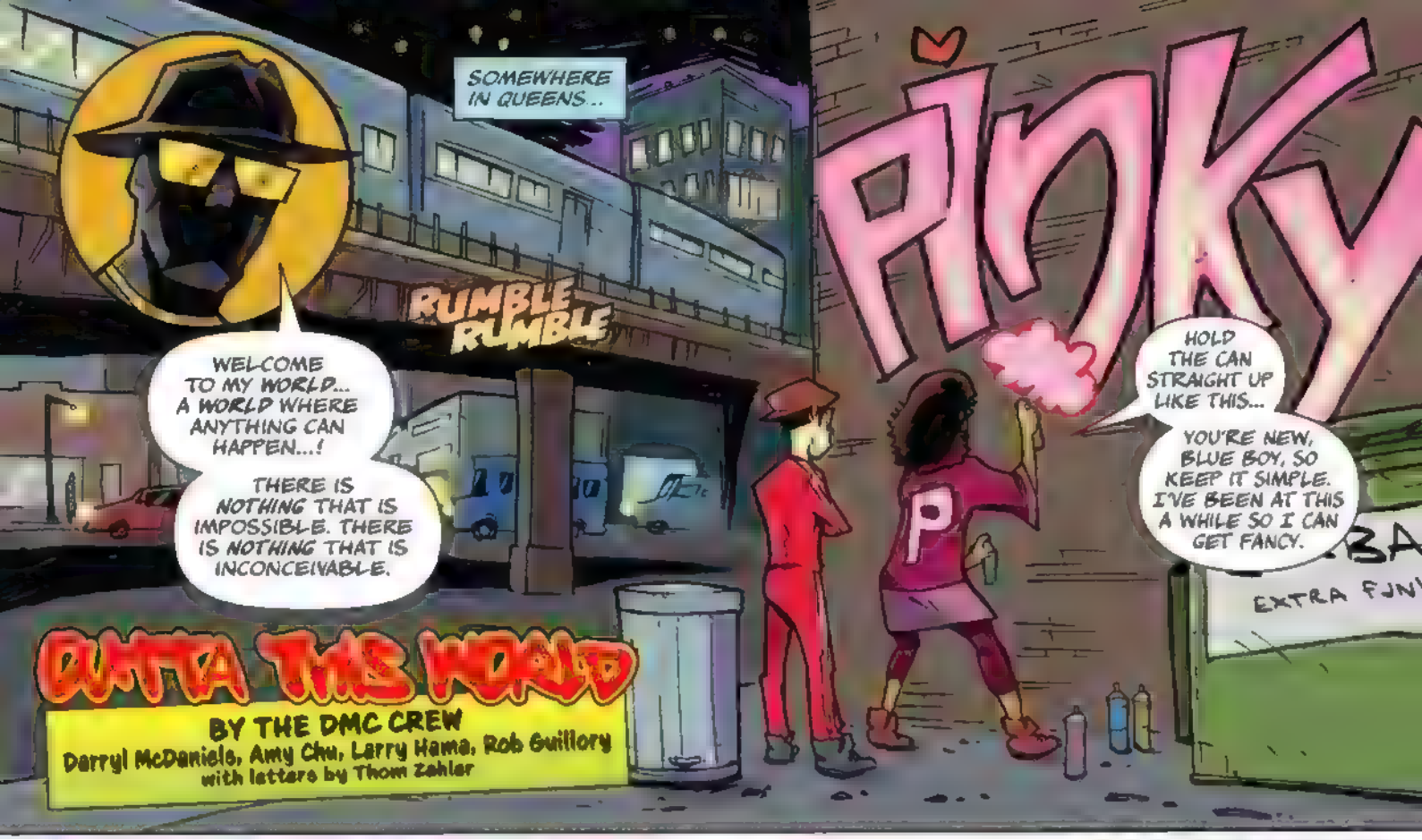
JAY-Z: I mean, it's a start, man. Shit. Goddamn (laughs).

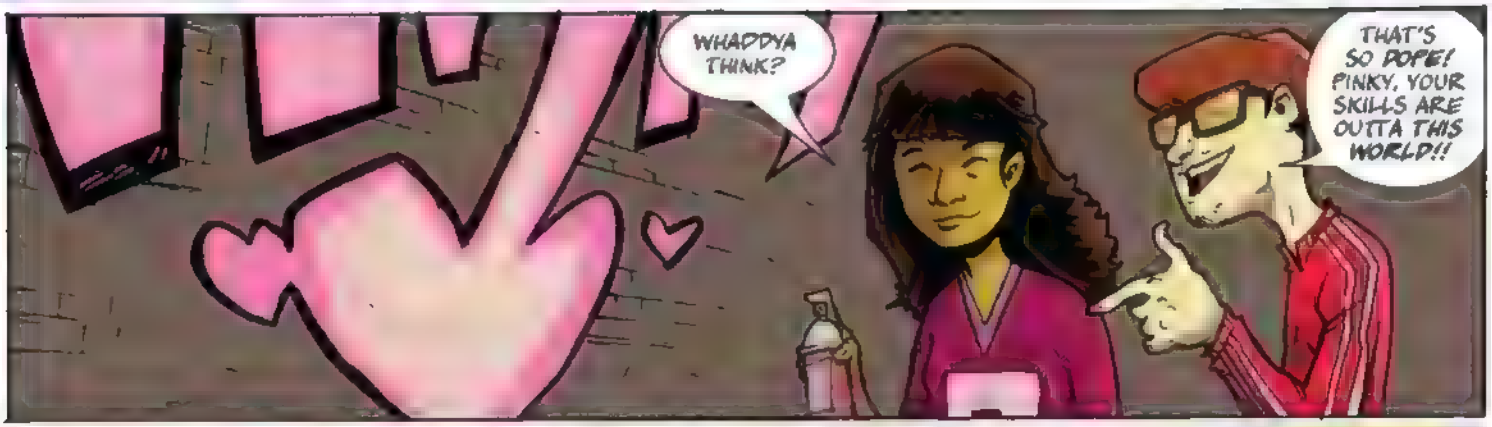
PLAYBOY: Could there ever be a successful gay rapper?

JAY-Z: That would be extremely tough. Rap is all, "Pickin' off a motherfucker like that. (Makes a mean face) I'm from the hood."

PLAYBOY: Every time you say, "I'm from the hood," you screw up your face like a cartoon villain.

JAY-Z: Because it's funny. "I'm from the hood." It's a joke. You can't take that seriously. Rappers, we ain't from the hood. We got nice homes and nice cars. We from the mansion.


SOMEWHERE IN QUEENS..
RUMBLE RUMBLE
WELCOME TO MY WORLD... A WORLD WHERE ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN...!
THERE IS NOTHING THAT IS IMPOSSIBLE. THERE IS NOTHING THAT IS INCONCEIVABLE.
PINKY
HOLD THE CAN STRAIGHT UP LIKE THIS...
YOU'RE NEW, BLUE BOY, SO KEEP IT SIMPLE. I'VE BEEN AT THIS A WHILE SO I CAN GET FANCY.
EXTRA FUN
OUTTA THIS WORLD
BY THE DMC CREW
Darryl McDaniels, Amy Chu, Larry Hama, Rob Guillory
with letters by Thom Zahler


WHADDYA THINK?
THAT'S SO DOPE! PINKY, YOUR SKILLS ARE OUTTA THIS WORLD!!

HMM, COULD USE SOME MORE EXPRESSION HERE...
HEY, WHAT'S THAT...?!

...A SHOOTING STAR?!
THAT'S NO SHOOTING STAR... MAYBE A PLANE?

IT'S HEADED THIS WAY!

KABOOOM!
WHOA, WHAT THE--?
SHHH!
GARBAGE

PINKY
GARBAGE
EXTRA FUNKY!

BAGE

GAH!
LET'S MOVE!

AAHHHHHHH!!

HELP!!!
#GULP!
YO, YOU'RE IN THE WRONG NEIGHBOR-HOOD!
IT'S DMC!
?!
DMC
P
RAD!
MAN, THAT'S ONE UGLY MUTHER--
CAREFUL, SCRATCH!

SPLUP!

LET'S SLICE AND DICE!
SLIPPERY GUY. HARD TO GET A HOLD...
SQUISH!

JASE, GET BACK! ARE YOU CRAZY?!
WHAT'S HE DOING WITH THAT BOOM BOX?!
IT'S NOT A BOOM BOX. IT'S MY NEW UNIVERSAL TRANSLATOR INVENTION.
LET'S ACTUALLY TRY TO LISTEN TO WHAT SHE HAS TO SAY...

MY NAME IS BKCKY BUT JUST CALL ME B. I COME TO YOUR WORLD IN PEACE.
I COME IN SEARCH OF THE MASTER.
I JUST WANTED TO MEET THE ONE WHO IS LEGENDARY THROUGHOUT THE GALAXY.
THE MASTER?
WHAT'S HE--I MEAN SHE-- TALKING ABOUT?
DMC
RECORDS
FOR SALE!
WHO, ME?
THE MASTER.
QUEEN OF THE UNIVERSE! YOUR WILD STYLE IS WELL KNOWN ON OUR PLANET WKWKYKY. WE WISH YOU TO TEACH US YOUR WAYS.
YOU MEAN SHE WASN'T ATTACKING THESE KIDS?
NOPE. IT'S ALL A CULTURAL MISUNDER-STANDING.
MY BAD, B.! HOW CAN WE MAKE IT UP TO YOU?

WELCOME TO MY WORLD, WHERE EXTRATERRESTRIALS BECOME EARTHLY.
IT'S A BLOCK PARTY!!
THE UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECT BECOMES SOMETHING OR SOMEONE YOU CAN IDENTIFY WITH!
NEVER TURNS INTO FOREVER!
UNREAL BECOMES FOR REAL!
LET'S TAKE THE PARTY TO YOUR PLACE, B.!!
"MY WORLD IS A WORLD OF SCIENCE, STYLE, CREATIVITY, DESIRE, BELIEF, ART, MUSIC, IMAGINATION AND MAGIC!
"IN MY WORLD IF YOU REACH FOR THE STARS, YOU CAN ACTUALLY TOUCH THEM.
"WELCOME TO MY WORLD. WELCOME TO MY UNIVERSE. WHERE EVERYONE BELONGS."
Visit the Universe of DMC at Darryl Makes Comics!
http://dmccomics.com/

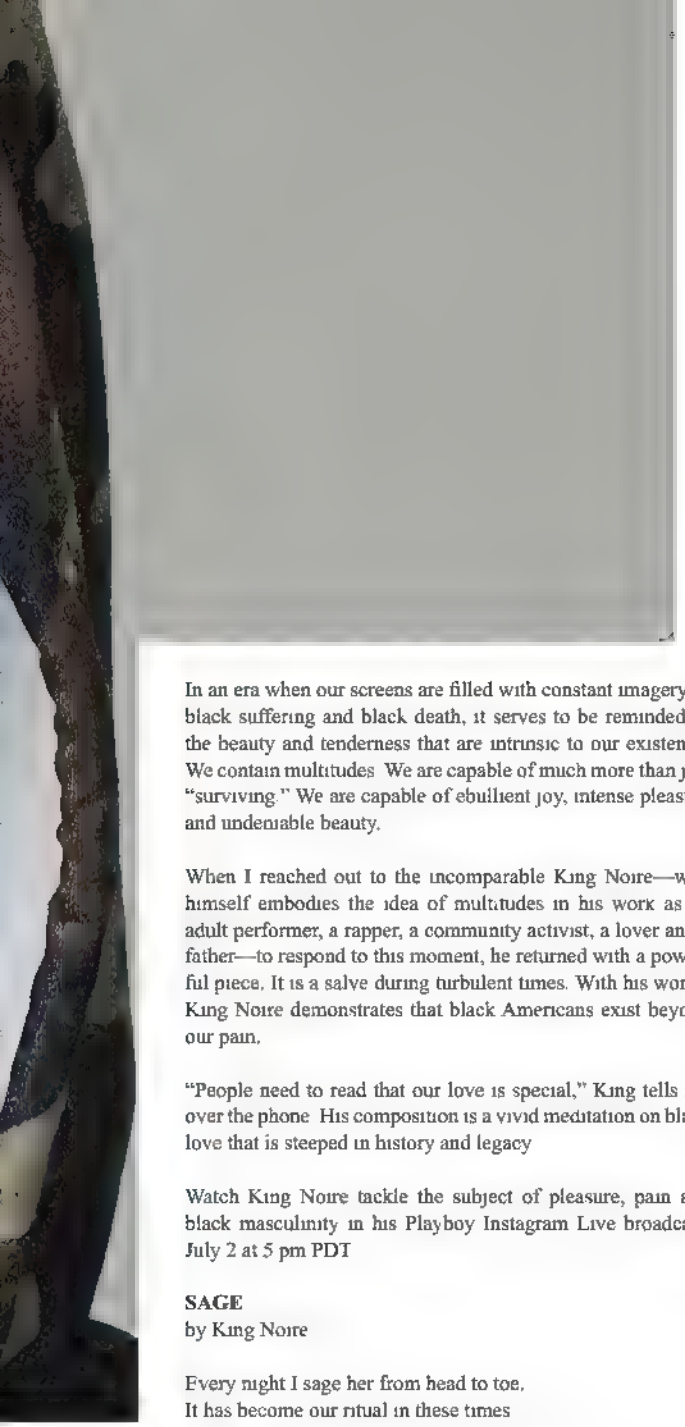
King Noire

on Pain, Pleasure and Black Love

The adult star and community activist wants people to know the Black community has more to offer than its pain.

WR TTEN BY **KING NOIRE**

INTRODUCT ON BY **ANITA LITTLE**



In an era when our screens are filled with constant imagery of black suffering and black death, it serves to be reminded of the beauty and tenderness that are intrinsic to our existence. We contain multitudes. We are capable of much more than just "surviving." We are capable of ebullient joy, intense pleasure and undeniable beauty.

When I reached out to the incomparable King Noire—who himself embodies the idea of multitudes in his work as an adult performer, a rapper, a community activist, a lover and a father—to respond to this moment, he returned with a powerful piece. It is a salve during turbulent times. With his words, King Noire demonstrates that black Americans exist beyond our pain.

"People need to read that our love is special," King tells me over the phone. His composition is a vivid meditation on black love that is steeped in history and legacy.

Watch King Noire tackle the subject of pleasure, pain and black masculinity in his Playboy Instagram Live broadcast, July 2 at 5 pm PDT.

SAGE
by King Noire

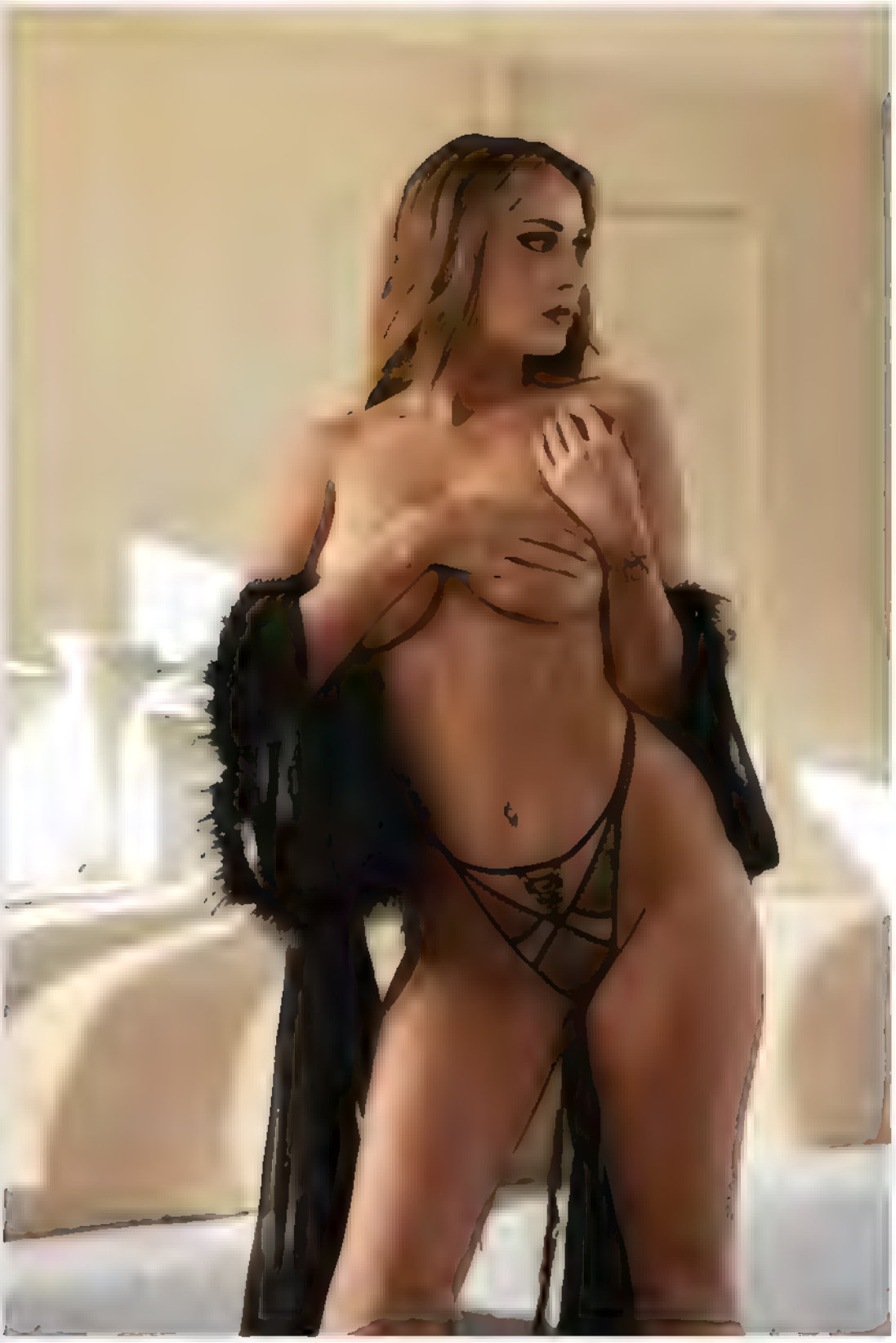
Every night I sage her from head to toe,
It has become our ritual in these times
The world around us succumbing to its sins and we stand on the front lines.
Our scars map the journey like constellations. A mutual understanding.
Hunted by police, scorned by politicians and lamented by pundits
Our love is treated as an enemy of the state
"Somebody kicked in the door and shot my girlfriend"
Breonna Taylor woke up to 8 shots in her bed.
Lovers left behind mourning for another chance to hold on to hope.
Ancestors jumped brooms and got married in secret without keeping master's last name,
"Until distance do you part" ..
Too much adoration would get us sold away to another plantation.
Ripped away from children and kinfolk.
Forced to hide love so that they would not call the wrath of the master's jealousy.
Those bodies that he coveted as property for torture and rape had visions beyond his plantation.
That big house still stands in Suffolk haunted by its mistress's brutality.
The slave quarters with that collared green patch planted by the door and the smell of cornbread has long since been torn down.
Unmarked graves beneath the city, this country was built on our pain.
The wind blowing through tobacco, sugar and cotton fields tells love stories in a 12-bar blues.
Tied to an oak tree, side by side next to the Moore's Ford Bridge.
After 5 years serving in the Pacific theater of World War II George Dorsey came home to his wife Mae and that longing for one another lead to a passionate conception.
Sharecroppers with bigger plans, but the GI Bill was not colorblind.
Called nigger when he returned to the states in his military uniform, freedom was a foreign idea.
The Dorseys were lynched as a family
Husband, Wife and Child
One of those white men cut Mae Dorsey open to remove the unborn seed from her uterus
Those lynch mobs collected fetuses, fingers and ears
Photographed for postcards with their children posing next to corpses burned beyond recognition.
Genitalia severed and saved in jars to be lusted over as souvenirs.
Covet our bodies and fear of our soul.
Wearing crucifixes as symbols, but what side of the burning cross were your forefathers on?
Jim Crow snatched lovers from a warm embrace.
COINTELPRO made sure our intimacy was no longer private.
The war on Black America is the government's longest-running campaign
I Can't Breathe
Hands Up Don't Shoot...
Police fire 50 shots killing Sean Bell on his wedding day and changing the reason for wearing a suit.
Widowed with no wedding "Until distance do you part. "
Our love sprints towards the drinking gourde
Inspired by revolutionary romance novels, we dream of Sundiata Acoli reuniting with Assata.
Every night I sage her from head to toe,
We honor our Orishas and every soul that has suffered just to love.
They tell us Black Love is an endangered species..
Fuck you talking about?!
Love kept us alive,
There are those who don't want love for us, so we love harder

Fuck harder

In those moments of respite, our pain transforms into pleasure, and our fantasies of freedom become one with our moments of truth.

When in bondage all love languages translate to liberty.

THE ART OF
SENSUALITY
Renee
Jayne



Happy to have you on the cover of Playboy! Can you tell us what the inspiration behind this photo shoot was? Hey, happy to be returning! The inspiration for this shoot was mixing the perfect amount of feminine with just enough sexiness. My vision was to create looks that are timeless and elegant.

Best place you have ever been to in the world? I haven't done a lot of traveling yet. Out of the places I have been, I really loved Japan, it was such a beautiful place to visit. The culture, the food, and the people are all amazing! It's somewhere I'd absolutely visit again.

What are some of your biggest dreams you hope to achieve? I hope to achieve a lot in life, but right now I'm focusing on a few little projects. But right now I strive to be the healthiest and happiest version of me.

What helps you decompress and relax? There's nothing better than a hot bubble bath, a good skincare routine and end the night with a glass of red and a good movie!

Describe the perfect kiss. The perfect kiss has to be slow and sexy and just the right amount of everything. Too much tongue can be overwhelming, it's a lot going on.

How romantic are you? I can be very romantic with the right person, I am such a loving person, they have to be deserving of my love and efforts

What is the most memorable date you've ever had? I've had a few very memorable dates, one being sunsets on a mountain with the most perfect view and watching the stars appear, picnics on the beach and vineyards. My most recent date was axe throwing, it was so much fun and full of laughs, definitely memorable

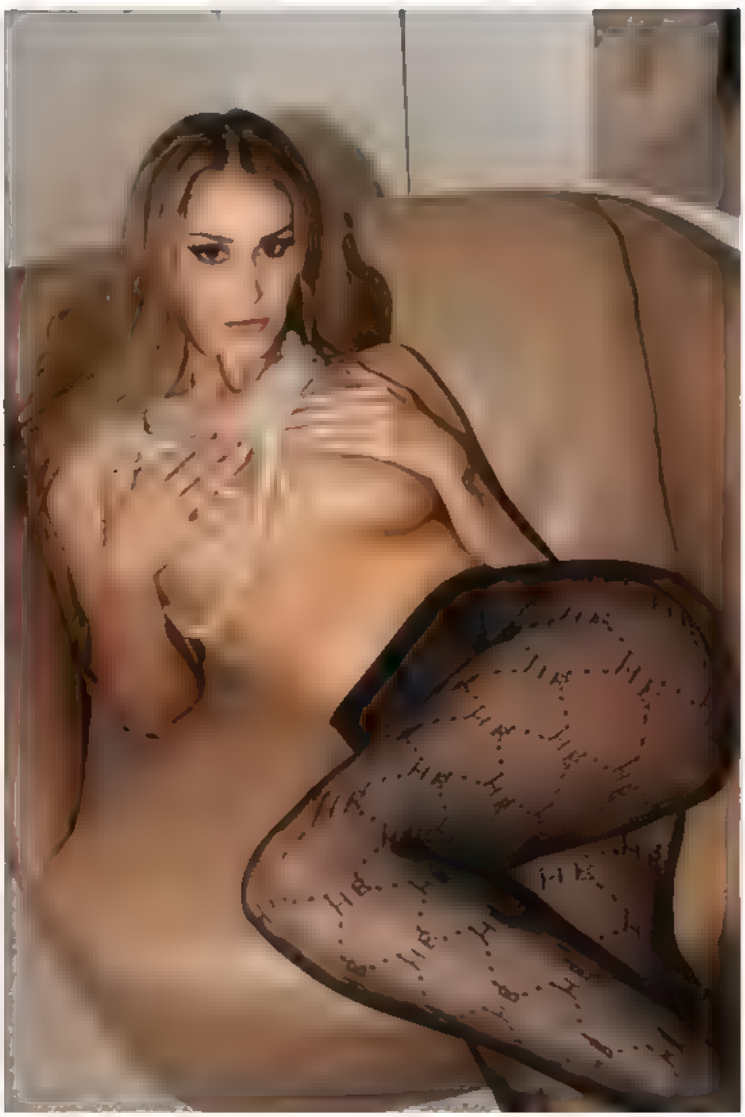
What makes you the ultimate partner to have? I'm super supportive of anything my partner wants to do (within reason), I'm loving and caring, I give my whole heart to someone and would do anything to put a smile on their face even in the hardest of times

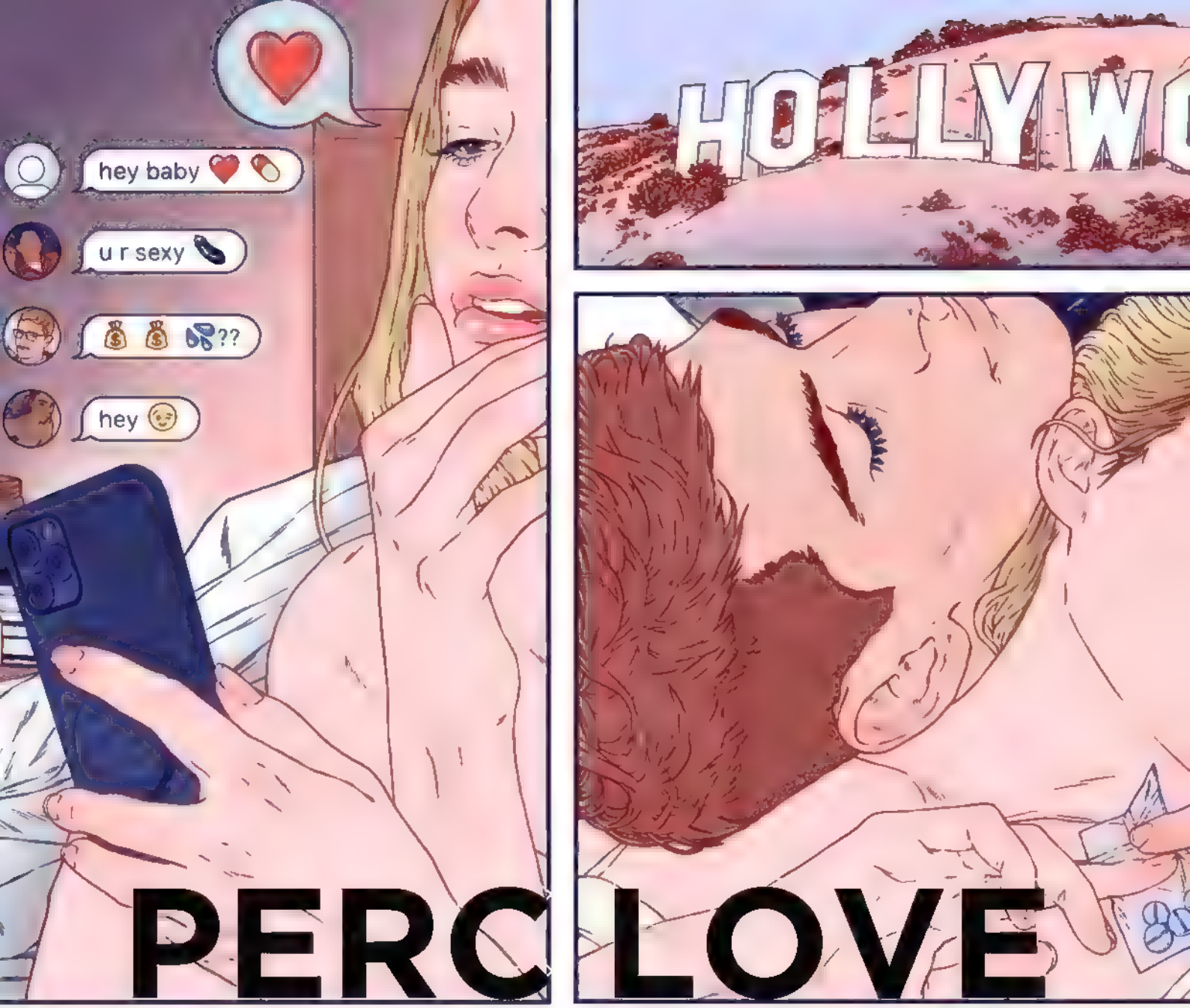
How important is sex to you in a relationship? Intimacy and affection are equally important. Sex is the most enjoyable when the connection between the both of you is mutual and respectful

What is your idea of a really good time? Anything fun! There's so many things that you can do to have a good time, options are infinite!

Any word of advice to fans on the right way to approach you? Come up, introduce yourself be respectful and I'm happy to engage in conversation!

Thanks for taking the time to speak to us, any last words to our readers? Thank you to the Playboy team for having me here again! It's always a pleasure! If you're wanting to keep up with anything I get up to make sure you give me a follow on Instagram @reneejayne xxx





PERC LOVE

Opioids, Instagram and two star-crossed lovers

BY **BEN WESTHOFF** ILLUSTRATIONS BY **SARAH MAXWELL**

5/325 TAB
TAKE 1 TAB
MOUTH EVERY
HOURS
Store Pricive.

Bennett Rhodes was scrolling through Instagram early last year when he came across a young woman named Andi Galland. Twenty years old, she posed on beaches and at music festivals, she displayed an impressive command of yoga. To Bennett she epitomized the perfect bikini-clad California girl.

From his Hollywood apartment, Bennett slid into her DMs. To his delight she quickly hit him back. She liked what she saw as well. Only 18, he was a good-looking if unlikely white trap rapper with a burgeoning Instagram following. They got to chatting. Despite his hardcore raps he came from a well-to-do family in San Diego—and so did she, it turned out. She still lived there. Bennett put his cards on the table.

"I'll bet you won't come up and see me in Hollywood," he said.

"I'll bet I will," she replied.

Bennett didn't believe her until she arrived on his doorstep that same day. He was immediately charmed. She was funny, kind and down to do absolutely anything. She, likewise, was won over by his energy and charisma. He carried himself like the star he wanted to be.

Andi stayed with Bennett the entire weekend, joining him and his friends at parties and restaurants. She'd brought Xanax pills with her, and the pair indulged, helping fuel an immediate infatuation. "It became recurring; she ended up visiting us for weeks at a time," says Bennett's then-roommate, Daniel "Gibby" Gibb.

Bennett wasn't a stranger to Xanax. He sometimes rapped about it: "Them Xanies on the yellow / Bitch don't get so mellow / Your legs looking like Jell-O." But as their romance blossomed, he learned that Andi was secretly hooked on an even more dangerous drug.

Unknown to most people until a few years ago, fentanyl is 50 times stronger than heroin, an opioid that leaves users feeling like they're floating on a cloud. Incredibly cheap to produce, fentanyl is cut into other drugs—particularly heroin and prescription pills—as a cost-saving measure by drug dealers. Synthetic opioids, of which fentanyl is among the most common, now kill more than 30,000 Americans per year, making them the deadliest drugs in U.S. history.

Gibby sensed the severity of Andi's problem when she would go into the bathroom "and just throw up like crazy," he says. "It was this overwhelming smell." Severe nausea is a common side effect of fentanyl.

One time Bennett and Gibby picked her up in San Diego. She was planning to visit a dealer.

"Let me buy some too," Bennett said.

"No," Andi replied adamantly. "You can't handle this."

Brushing off her concerns, Bennett began taking fentanyl with her. He knew the risks but was so obsessed with Andi that he didn't care; he wanted to feel what she was feeling. The euphoria was otherworldly, and sharing it with the person he suddenly loved more than anyone heightened the experience.

When they took fentanyl together, time stopped and their love was eternal, even as the drug overtook them and upended everything.

To Bennett's mother Liz Rhodes, their fate was Shakespearean. "They're like a Romeo and Juliet couple," she says.

During Bennett's childhood his father had a thriving international banking career and his nanny resembled Mary Poppins. Bennett was a martial arts prodigy and a surfer with infectious enthusiasm. "He could have done anything," says Liz. We're at her home just outside San Diego, the views are breathtaking. She's immaculately put together and quite accomplished herself, a corporate education specialist, former law school assistant dean and author.

At different points in his life Bennett was borderline-ADD and diagnosed with anxiety. In high school his parents divorced. He associated with a gang of violent La Jolla High School surfer kids known as the Groms. In 2016, just before his 16th birthday, a terrible car accident left him with a brain bleed. His girlfriend at the time helped him recover, and he became consumed by their relationship. When they broke up he left her a suicide note, and then drove to the Coronado Bridge, though he didn't jump.

More than a cry for help, it was a cry for love, a reflection of the instability in his life. "Bennett didn't have anyone asking him about his feelings for most of his life," says Gibby. "I don't really think he got a lot of constant love, and so when he got it finally, he was really obsessed with it."

Andi was the next girl to consume him. Born Andrea Galland, she lived in San Diego's inland Tierrasanta neighborhood and attended the experimental High Tech High charter school system, where she wrote fiction and dreamed of becoming a surgeon. The school could be lenient, and she was sharp enough to "skate by without doing much," says her friend Gabriel Jacobs. He and another friend said she was troubled by a particularly traumatic childhood event she preferred not to discuss.

Her sophomore year boyfriend Zion Maly saw her become increasingly preoccupied with drugs and drinking. "I would get random Snapchats of her, like, knocked out at parties, or with people snorting cocaine off her," he says. "I cheated on Andi, and then it went all downhill. She started drinking more, partying more, doing more drugs. I felt like I was responsible."

After high school she worked restaurant jobs and hung out with her best friend Jane. (Jane's name has been changed, she declined to be interviewed.) They grew as close as two young, starry-eyed people can be, residing together in San Diego and even sharing a bed. Vacationing in exotic locations, they posted swimsuit photos to Instagram; Jane was equally stunning, and a number of brands attempted to recruit them. Like many millennials, Andi also had a "Finsta," a private "fake Instagram" page showcasing the sillier and more inebriated side of her life.

According to two people who knew them well, Andi and Jane patronized the website Seeking Arrangement, where "sugar babies," often young women, are paired with "sugar daddies," usually successful older men. Being young and beautiful on the internet gave them access to fawning men, free clothes and wild parties.

They, along with Bennett, were poster children for the Instagram age, where young people seek fame and fulfillment online, and likes and new followers supply the dopamine kicks. Instagram has changed the way young people present themselves. In Romeo and Juliet, ballrooms were where the kids found each other, picked fights and fell in love. Today's ballroom is Instagram, and it's always open. Meanwhile, the red-light district of hookup sites and the anarchic bazaars of the dark web, where just about any drug is a few clicks away, add to a digital world that can be lethally alluring to kids who, like Bennett and Andi, are struggling with addiction and trauma.

As Andi descended into fentanyl abuse, she found herself associating with dubiously motivated guys with access to drugs. Smart, ambitious and seemingly headed for big things, her potential began to erode.

Synthetic opioids already kill more people annually than any drugs in American history, but having wreaked havoc on the East Coast fentanyl is only now arriving in California. In the San Diego region, fentanyl deaths jumped by 68 percent between 2018 and 2019.

Because of dealers' propensity to secretly cut fentanyl into other drugs, today's black-market pills and powders are especially dangerous for experimentation-minded young people. Fentanyl has been particularly deadly in hip-hop, killing rappers Lil Peep, Mac Miller and Lexii Alijai, as well as music legends Prince and Tom Petty.

Though rap artists including Bennett, who rapped under the name Beanie, glorify popping pills and drinking lean, virtually no rappers brag about doing hard drugs like fentanyl. But since fentanyl is increasingly cut into black-market pills that look exactly like Xanax or Per

A

cocet, it's often essentially the same thing.

Andi and Bennett snorted crushed-up tablets called Percocet 30s. These weren't pharmaceutical-grade pills containing acetaminophen and oxycodone; in fact, actual Percocet doesn't come in 30 milligram doses. These were counterfeit blue pills, made with fentanyl. Andi and Bennett knew this, but it didn't slow them down. In fact, it made their love feel more real. Bennett called the phenomenon "Perc love."

"It was the most magical high I ever felt. Literally I found true love in a person and in a drug," says Bennett's brother Mark Rhodes, who experienced Perc love himself while taking the pills with Jane, noting that it dulls one's libido even while it ignites one's infatuation. (He says he soon came to his senses, quit fentanyl and broke things off with her.)

For Bennett and Andi, this euphoria was wrapped up in their happiness with each other. They stayed up all night in his room, watching Gossip Girl in a haze or just kissing and cuddling. Perc love was easy to confuse with actual love.

They chased fantasies: gritty rap star and carefree traveler. The social media identities they fashioned for themselves papered over pain from their upbringings, and fentanyl served to smooth out the rough edges. When they snorted the powder, they had all the love in the world they needed. Perc love helped them be with each other, and it helped them be with themselves. But when the opioids wore off, their self-confidence plummeted, and reality set in.

As they grew closer, Andi shared her drug contact. She received the Percocet 30s from a man named Andrew, she told Bennett. Andrew was another man apparently auditioning to be her sugar daddy, but he wasn't an investment banker or wealthy financier. He was a fentanyl trafficker, with an operation stretching across the border.

Daren Andrew Lee goes by his middle name. Born in 1983, he grew up in Mormon country, living for a time in Salt Lake City and studying organic chemistry at Brigham Young University, Hawaii. With a white-collar résumé atypical for a dealer of street drugs, he arrived in San Diego to begin work with a biopharma company in early 2013.

But Andrew suffered personal setbacks, including becoming estranged from his young son and getting involved with heroin. In 2015, he received probation after selling heroin to undercover cops, according to court records, he "told officers he . . frequently crossed into Mexico to bring drugs back over the border to sell." In 2017, he was charged with misdemeanor possession of controlled substances including heroin, and he successfully completed a drug treatment program. (For all the well-deserved bluster against the war on drugs, drug sentences have actually been reduced quite a bit in recent years.)

Somehow, he maintained steady work in the pharmaceutical industry. According to his LinkedIn profile, he started as a clinical operations consultant in May 2018 for Acadia Pharmaceuticals, a San Diego-based company making medications for disorders including Parkinson's disease. He was hired temporarily through employment agency Suna Solutions, his page notes, and under his areas of experience he lists "Opioid Induced Constipation." "This is by FAR the best job I have had in the industry in over 10 years!" he wrote.

Life was good. He bought a BMW and moved into a luxury apartment overlooking the Padres' baseball stadium. He displayed his amateur photography work on his Instagram page—beaches at sunset and dazzling downtown cityscapes.

It's unclear when Andrew began trafficking fentanyl pills from Mexico or how he began his courtship of Andi and Jane, but the two events overlapped. He sought to impress them by offering gifts like shoes and watches, says Gibby, who grew close to both women. "He was creepy and weird," Gibby goes on, adding Andi and Jane were only "using" him for his fentanyl access. "They could do it because they were very attractive, and they had this addiction."

In the fall of 2019, he posted a picture of the three of them in his elevator. For the photo, Andrew donned sunglasses and attempted to look suave. Jane and Andi wear short skirts, their arms draped over him. Apparently attempting to be funny, Andrew wrote: "Can't believe what progress [Jane and Andi] have made since I met them panhandling, I'd say they clean up nice . . #futurehousemates."

Bennett's father David—a large guy whose face, like his son's, radiates curiosity and kindness—says that, in the last week of November, Bennett detailed to his parents conversations he and Andi had with Andrew. David listened carefully as Bennett laid out Andrew's attempts to recruit Andi and Jane to move into his apartment and help him expand his fentanyl business.

According to Bennett's parents, Andrew explained his smuggling operation and told Bennett and Andi his position with Acadia helped insulate him. "Lee bragged about using his pharma company's credentials to get easily back and forth across the Mexican border," David says. (Andrew did not respond to requests for comment; nor did Acadia Pharmaceuticals.)

In the spring of 2019 Bennett's parents caught wind of his fentanyl habit, and his mother Liz rushed him off to Hawaii for a week, to sober up. He swam in the ocean and played ukulele, an instrument he learned from the now-deceased Chargers great Junior Seau, a family friend. Liz expressed her concern about Bennett's drug-centered relationship with Andi. Bennett pledged to stay clean, he hoped to help Andi

The red-light district of hookup sites and the anarchic bazaars of the dark web add to a digital world that can be lethally alluring.

beat fentanyl too.

"He was going to save Andi, then save himself, and then they would live a clean life together," says Liz.

That summer Bennett moved into a new apartment in Hollywood, just off Sunset Boulevard, with his brother Mark. It was a young hip-hopper's Shangri-La, a crash pad filled with bongs, top-line recording equipment and rolls of fake $100 bills for music videos. Mark is a driven rap producer and singer-songwriter known as MTStreets, and he and Bennett attended the Los Angeles Recording School. They called their music together "Hollywood trap"—a melding of the glossy and the grimy. Mark is most in his element when blasting his music between pulls from the water pipe, rapping along with Bennett's best tracks.

Those who knew their backgrounds might blanche at their images as gritty hip-hop artists—Bennett once wrote in an Instagram post, "Hard to believe we came from nothing"—considering their upbringing in tony La Jolla, and that their mother leased the Hollywood apartment. Still, hip-hop has always been about remaking oneself, and the two brothers' obvious love for the trap genre helped them pull it off.

Having worked up a business plan for his music career with his dad, Bennett was now preparing his debut mixtape, Never Comfortable, spending down his five-figure settlement from his high school car accident on well-known collaborators—including associates of his hero, Gucci Mane, a rapper who glamorizes Percocet in his music.

"We had dreams of winning Grammys, of being millionaires," Mark says. Bennett built up an Instagram following of nearly 10,000, posing with gold chains, vape pens and stacks of cash.

Mark and Bennett drew into their orbit local performers and impresarios, including co-workers from restaurants where they worked. Paul Fleming, a Los Angeles rapper known as Cloud, was shocked when Bennett announced his sudden resignation from Jersey Mike's, tossing aside his hat and apron mid-shift and walking out. "We have a higher calling," Bennett had said.

This impressed Cloud, who also welcomed Andi and her glamorous energy into his social circle. "She was like Marilyn Monroe," he says. "They were next."

But behind the scenes fentanyl was back in Andi and Bennett's lives. While high everything was great, but when they crashed they were miserable, and the only balm was more fentanyl. Andi began to withdraw. While she maintained admiration and even love for Bennett, her commitment to the relationship waned. "But Bennett was not letting it go," Gibby says. "Like a puzzle piece that doesn't fit."

His addiction out of control, Bennett agreed to check into Passages Malibu, an elite treatment center known for its steep price (as much as $100,000 a month for a private room) and for not adhering to a 12-step recovery model. There he experienced the agony of detox—"It was like skin was being ripped off of his body," remembers his father—only to find even greater agony on the other side.

Perc love helped them be with each other, and it helped them be with themselves.

On Sunday, November 24, after being unable to reach Andi by

He used an app to discover her phone's location. It was in the DEA's office in San Diego.

ner. "What are some of our best family memories?" he asked.

His mother was perplexed. "Bennett, you have a lifetime of amazing stuff," she said. "At home I'll pull out every photo album and we'll reconnect you to your wonderful childhood."

Bennett spent his first night out of rehab at home, with Mark keeping close tabs on him. The next day, November 30, they boarded a train to San Diego.

They planned to celebrate a late Thanksgiving with the family, but when Liz picked up the boys at the train station, Bennett wasn't himself. He seemed "unhinged" and "drugged," she said—but not on fentanyl. He had apparently taken lorazepam, an anti-anxiety medicine best known as Ativan, that Liz believes he received from Passages. Like Xanax, Ativan is a benzodiazepine. It's a downer that, when combined with fentanyl, another downer, is particularly lethal.

An argument broke out. Bennett, reeling, made nasty accusations against his mother, and she told him to get his act together. Bennett and Mark eventually decided to spend the night at the Carlsbad apartment of their friends William and Hannah. First, Bennett visited Andi's parents to offer his condolences. They took him in like a son, and each consoled the other. At some point that day he also made his way downtown. Near Andrew's apartment, he met a dealer and purchased six or seven Percocet 30s.

Back in Carlsbad he acted like nothing had happened. He said goodnight to his brother and friends. "He gave us all a hug; he thanked us for letting him crash," says William. "I felt that everything would be okay. It was a safe place." Bennett went into William's bedroom and closed the door.

In the morning, Mark checked on his brother. The door was locked; he picked it. He found Bennett face down on the bed. His body was hard. Mark turned him over and saw that his face was purple.

Bennett had died exactly a week after Andi. He was 19. The entire relationship, from Andi's appearance at Bennett's door to their fatal overdoses, lasted less than a year.

"It was almost like an out-of-body experience" hearing his son was dead, says David. "Just the worst feeling a human could feel."

Bennett left a note of sorts, by way of a short video found on his phone. "I love everything and everyone so much," reads the caption of the video, in which Bennett flashes a series of cryptic gang signs, and then shows off a line of fentanyl on the bathroom lavatory, the same line that presumably killed him.

Some family members believe he knew the dose would be fatal, and

thus his death was suicide. His mother isn't sure. "I don't think it was intentional suicide," says Liz. "I do believe he knew the risks. Maybe he didn't care. But I think he simply went back to using because he was in such a fragile, painful time."

Ultimately, Bennett fulfilled both of his desires following Andi's death. He numbed himself into oblivion, and he got retribution. Shortly before he died, Bennett explained Daren Andrew Lee's smuggling operation, says David.

Andrew went to Mexico frequently, Bennett told him, allegedly purchasing some 7,000 pills per week for about $3 each. Once brought back across the border, he sold the pills for $25 to $30 each.

David relayed this information to the DEA, who put Andrew's name into a database. Only three days after Bennett's death, on December 4, 2019, Andrew returned from Mexico through the San Ysidro land port of entry. His passport was flagged, and Andrew was found with two Ziploc bags, according to court records, one containing 21 grams of "blue circular pills," which tested positive for fentanyl, and another harboring 23 grams of "white bar-shaped pills," which tested positive for heroin. Though the purity of the pills isn't known, this was likely a large amount considering 2 milligrams of pure fentanyl can kill. "Lee admitted to law enforcement that he obtained heroin and fentanyl pills in Mexico with the intent to distribute them in the United States," read his court records. He pleaded guilty and, in January, was sentenced to four years, two of them suspended.

Both Andi's and Bennett's families remain devastated. Bennett's brother Mark—his best friend, close collaborator, and fellow dreamer—has sorrow in his eyes as he goes through the motions of everyday life in the apartment where his brother no longer lives. The sadness is tempered only by anger. He has blame to go around, but maintains especially strong words for Daren Andrew Lee. "He knew Andi died, and he kept selling. He knew Bennett died, and he kept selling," says Mark, his voice thickening. "Basically, that's the definition of a serial killer."

Ultimately, Andi and Bennett were overtaken by the latest, deadliest trends in music and drug culture. Monied kids have dreamed big and partied wild for decades, but they had the bad fortune to come of age when a new, ultra-potent chemical was killing more Americans than any drug previously, at a time when the most popular music culture glamorized it by calling it something it isn't.

Bennett's parents have immersed themselves in trying to get justice

Bennett's parents have immersed themselves in trying to get justice.

for Bennett—pushing for murder charges against Andrew and investigating why Acadia Pharmaceuticals took him on in the first place. They are also working to launch awareness programs geared toward youth, many of whom have no idea that any black-market pill or powder could be spiked with a lethal dose of fentanyl. Liz wants to focus on music and video, mediums "that are easily consumable via social media," she says. Liz is also committed to "reducing shame and bringing the epidemic into family conversations."

"If we save just one life," says David Rhodes, "it's worth it."

Bennett's dream of remaining by Andi's side has come true, in a sense. He is buried close to her at El Camino Memorial Park in San Diego, perhaps only 40 feet apart.

"He had a dream and wanted a life with this girl," says Liz. "Neither is to blame for the other's death. They were adults dancing too close to the flame."

Photography by **Stephen Dillon | @sdillonphoto**

Happy to have you on the cover of Playboy New Zealand! Can you tell us about the photoshoot? I absolutely loved it. It was so much fun getting these beautiful shots and working with Stephen, the final results speak for themselves

Best place you have ever been to in the world? The best place I've ever been .. hmmm . that one is tough honestly, it's less about the place and more about who you're with. Traveling with good company can make any place seem like the best in the world

What are some of your biggest dreams you hope to achieve? I have been so blessed with my career Everything I've ever wanted to achieve I have made it happen I know that I can do anything in this world if I work hard and genuinely put forth the effort that is re

quired. As for something I would still like to achieve, at this point in my life, I just want to continue to be happy. I have really created a beautiful life, and I have everything I need.

What helps you decompress and relax? I have two horses and my favorite thing to do when I'm stressed or bored is to go out to the barn and spend time with them. It's very therapeutic for me. I am an animal lover.

Who has been the most influential person in your life and why? I have a very diverse group of friends. Every one of them inspires me to be a better version of myself every single day.

How romantic are you? I don't know that I am super romantic myself, but I do love when a man does romantic things sometimes. Girls love flowers and girls love to be loved on. I'm no different.

What makes you the ultimate partner to have? What makes me the ultimate partner? Well, I would say that I fully support who I am to help them be the best version of themselves. I want my partner to have independence and their own happiness outside of the relationship. I am very supportive and considerate.

How important is sex to you in a relationship? I think sex and intimacy are very important parts of a relationship. You need these things to have a healthy balanced relationship in my opinion.

What is your idea of a really good time? For me doing anything outside. I love nature and animals.

Any word of advice to fans on the right way to approach you? I don't mind it at all just please be respectful and kind. Treat me how you would like to be treated. I love meeting people.

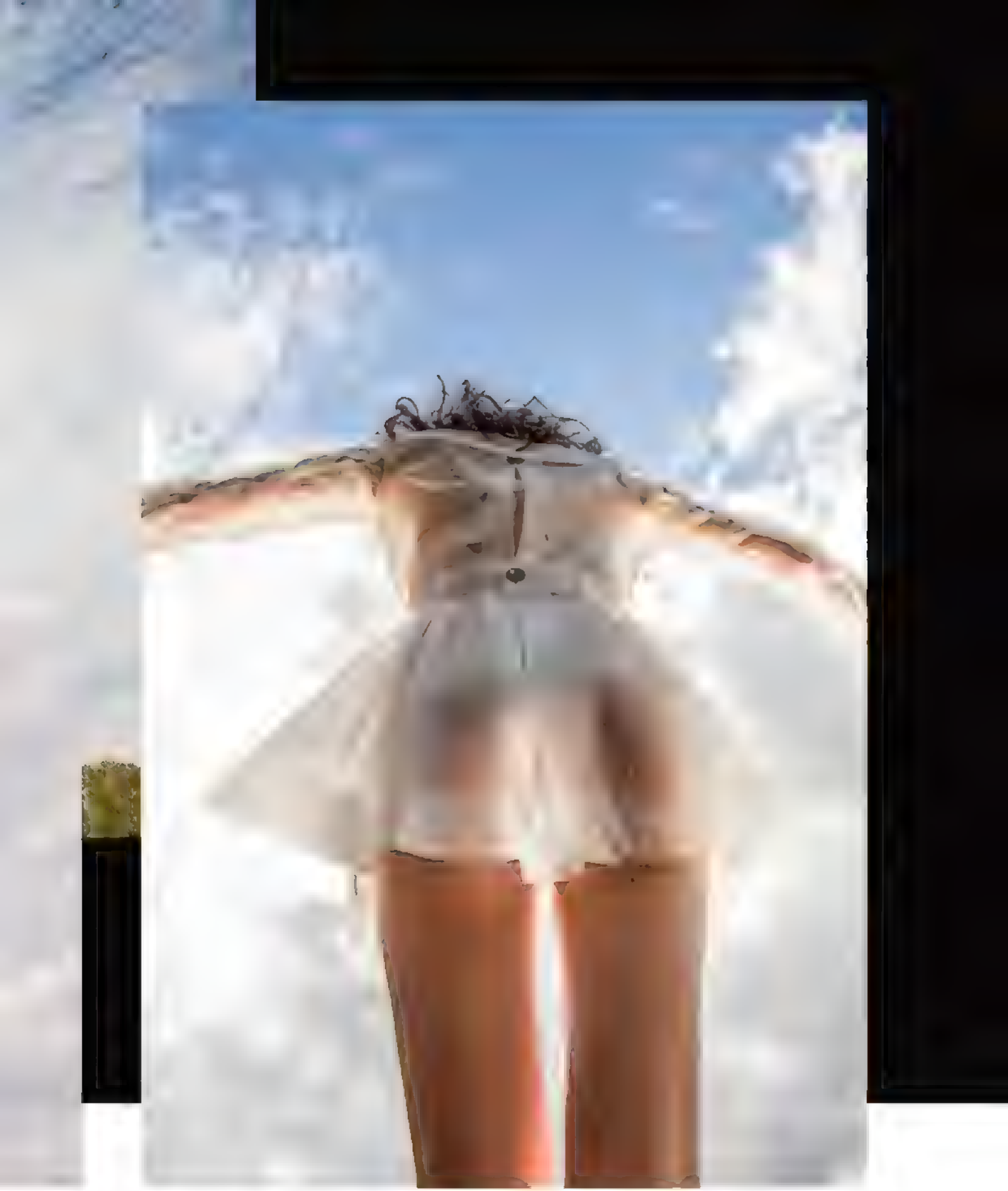
Thanks for taking the time to speak to us, any last words for our readers? I just would like to say that I am so very thankful. I'm proof that you can achieve anything if you are determined, consistent, and have self-discipline.

Free FORM

A Pictorial by Blaise Cepis

The open sky and the female form—a soaring study featuring Maggie White, Jorlenne Caraballo, Ndeye Magne Ndiaye and Priscilla Bass

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
BLAISE CEPIS



Edging

WRITTEN BY
ANITA LITTLE

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
KATIE BAILIE

If your libidinous mind can imagine it, there's probably already a term for it

edging (*v*) the act of delaying an orgasm for as long as possible for the ultimate benefit of a more intense climax

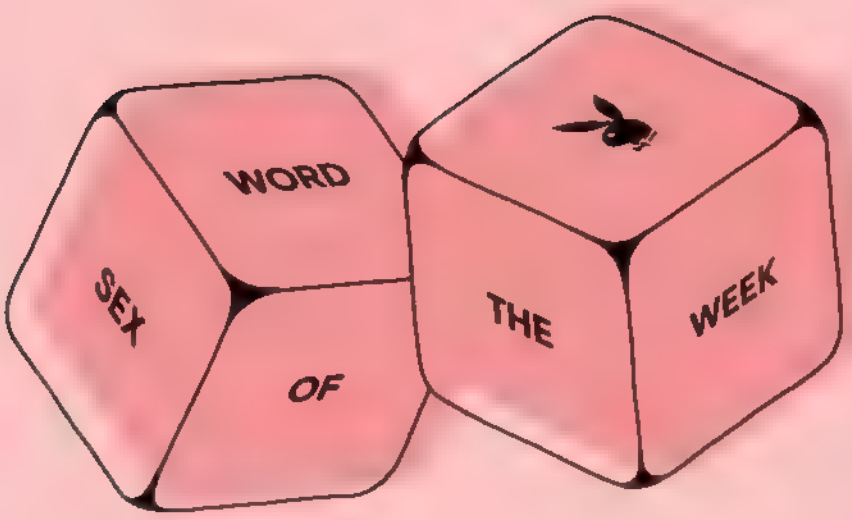
Jeremy edged himself to the brink, pulling himself back each time. When he finally let go, the release was more powerful than anything he had felt before.

Everyone knows what mind control is. So imagine that, but for your junk. Edging takes a remarkable amount of concentration and discipline, but the payoff can literally knock you off your feet. To edge is to deliberately delay sexual gratification to create a more intense climax later on. So essentially masturbating or having sex to the tipping point of orgasm, and then taking your foot off the gas. To the unenlightened person this may sound incredibly frustrating, but to the sexual connoisseur it's the gift that keeps on givin

To become a master of edging, starting out with a start-stop technique is pretty straightforward. Pleasure yourself until you get excited and then hit pause for a few seconds or a few minutes. Once you're back to a relaxed state, do it again and keep doing it. Each time you start and stop, you're increasing the tension level in your pelvic floor—tension that will be released in a powerful way once you allow yourself to go over the orgasm cliff

Not only is edging great for increasing pleasure for all genders, it can help men who struggle with premature ejaculation. By diligently practicing edging on your own and then with a partner, you'll have better control of those muscles and be able to delay orgasm for longer

Delayed gratification could be the key to leveling up your intimate life. So go slowly and smell the roses.



Pompoir

WRITTEN BY
ANITA LITTLE

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
KATIE BAILIE

If your libidinous mind can imagine it, there's probably already a term for it

pompoir (*n*) contracting and releasing the vaginal muscles in order to stimulate the penis during penetrative sex

Gemma mounted her partner and performed pompoir on his erect penis until they both climaxed

This week's word is great for your orgasm if you're a vagina-haver, but it can also strengthen your pelvic walls, leading to better bladder health! It's called pompoir, and some basically consider it a fancy word for doing Kegels on a dick.

During traditional penetrative sex, two partners will move rhythmically in tandem with each other, thrusting or rocking. In pompoir, however, both parties are completely stationary and the only part in motion is the vagina-haver's vaginal canal. The pelvic floor muscles—specifically the pubococcygeus muscles—do all the heavy lifting. They squeeze and release, and—if the practitioner is highly skilled—they also tug at the penis, push it down or even gently twist on the shaft. To a casual outside observer, it will look like a woman is just calmly sitting cowgirl-style on her partner's penis, until, of course, the tension builds to the point where one (or, ideally, both) of them orgasms. It takes a lot of patience, concentration and restraint, but the payoff can be a mind-blowing climax.

Doing pompoir exercises on your own, outside the context of sex, can also do wonders for your pelvic floor health. Over time, the pelvic floor can weaken due to childbirth, menopause or other age-related factors. Practicing pompoir can help regain power in those muscles, leading to health benefits like a stronger bladder. Whatever your reason for wanting to become a pompoir master, you'll have the satisfaction of knowing that each practice session gets you closer to being in complete control of your (and your partner's) orgasm

goal driven

ANGEL WICKY

Such an absolute honor to have you on the cover of Playboy! Tell us about your daily schedule as a model, do you have a routine? Hi! Thank you! And great to be here with you! Well, my schedule can look multiple different ways at the moment. I have my own business and production, so I spend my time either working for myself, enjoying my free time, or at school. I study Coaching and Psychotherapy at university. I accept bookings for others very rarely. My usual routine when I'm not shooting or at school is to be woken up by my little kitten who wants to play. To start my day with a positive mindset, affirmations and gratitude. Pet my kitten and play with it. Have a great breakfast, coffee and superfood mix. And go see and spent time with my horse. Pet him, go for a walk. Ride in nature. Switch off and recharge. Then have a late lunch, do some pc work, answer to my fans, pet my kitten even more and read book, watch lectures from universities around the world or podcasts on multiple different topics I educate myself on.

What are some of your biggest dreams you hope to achieve? I achieved so much already but at the moment I'm in a process of completely changing my life. Moving away from the adult industry and show business and more into a spiritual and mental health area. For the past two years, I'm also working as coach, mentor and psychotherapist. I'm taking care of my physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being through different sessions, retreats and experiences. I'm helping and healing myself so I can help and heal others. And support them on their own journey even better. I want to acquire education and international certification on the topic I study (coaching, psychotherapy, work with energies, nutrition.), to have my own studio where people can come meet me and get the help and support, they need. And a huge thing which is a surprise at the moment. But don't worry, you will be the first to know about it.

What helps you decompress and relax? Meditation, nature, my horse and kitten, sport, d.i.y projects, painting, dancing, singing, friends, my dad, cooking, hot bath, massage, music.

Who has been the most influential person in your life and why? The person I'm most grateful for is my best friend and personal assistant. She helped me start over three years ago. Supported every decision I made and encouraged me in changes I'm undergoing. I'm also grateful for my dad, my spiritual teachers, shamans, coaches and psychotherapists. They are giving me a

lot of lessons which helps me to grow, evolve and follow my intuition.

How romantic are you? Depends on my mood. I like flowers, candles, dinner dates, breakfast in bed, long walks, holding hands, cuddling or a massage. But I also like rope, whip, handcuffs, blindfolds and some kinky fun where I play with and torture people. I'm not only an Angel. I'm a wicked angel.

What is the most memorable date you've ever had? The best date I ever had was when I took myself out on a date. And showed myself unconditional love and support. Where I was content and happy with who I am and where I am at life. Where I congratulated myself and celebrated far, I've come and who I've become. Enjoying the time, food, music, massage etc. Caring for myself and loving myself.

What was the biggest lesson from your worst breakup? That I have to put myself first. My physical and mental health first. That I don't need anyone to make me feel better, happier and loved. That I don't need some outer validation to feel enough. That I don't need to be scared to change, set boundaries, leave and start over. That I'm perfect and enough the way I am. And if someone doesn't see it and respect it, he/she has no place in my life.

Would you rather be loved, respected, or admired? This is a tough one! But definitely respected.

Are you a city traveler or nature explorer? I like both but I'm more drawn to nature. Animals, nature, forest, sea. Away from people, noises, smells and everything. Peace and quiet. Birds chirping, water running, sun shining. Horse riding, scuba diving, or just reading a book under a tree.

What's on your travel bucket list? Peru, Ecuador, India, Indonesia, Philippines, Bali.

Where can our readers catch up with you and stay updated with your work? On my onlyfans.com/angelwicky, fancentro.com/angelwicky. There I built a community where I share my everyday life, ups and downs, experiences, news, my exclusive production, and where I chat with my awesome members. Where we support and help each other. As family. Instagram @angelwickyofficial, Twitter: angel_wicky_il, Facebook angel wicky. All my social networks are on my angelwickyofficial.net.

Guide
to Cyber Sex
From a Cam Girl

You open your favorite messaging app to start a video call with your significant other. The line trills until you see their face emerge onto the screen in front of you. You laugh and say hello, but now what? With the constant stressors of 2020, you might find yourself too depressed or uncertain about how to tend to your relationship despite wanting to explore intimacy. Cyber sex with a partner can be overwhelming for couples camming together for the first time, with a global pandemic separating us from each other, there aren't many other opportunities to connect.

I applied what I learned from years as a cam girl to my own long-distance relationship with a spouse who has traveled frequently for both military deployments and a civilian job. Although my spouse and I are quarantining together, we've spent most of our marriage navigating time apart—and maintaining our sex life from a distance kept us healthier as individuals while also strengthening our bond.

If you want to try cybersex but you aren't sure how to get started, these tips will help you and your partner enjoy the experience once the camera blinks on.

Make Time for "The Talk"

Sending a few unannounced nudes won't help you get this conversation started. It's important to discuss risks, goals and boundaries before you send anything steamy. Embrace your own vulnerability by explaining why you want to try cybersex and gauge your partner's comfort level.

Honest, thorough discussions were a critical part of keeping me safe and comfortable during sex work—and also ensured that we'd both find authenticity and affirmation in the encounter. Establishing goals and boundaries makes that possible and keeps everyone on the same page. It's crucial that all parties completely consent to the activities you'll pursue together and that everyone's needs are met.

Even if you have a comfortable, secure sex life together in person, your online time together will be a different experience. If you're feeling too shy or inexperienced to talk about what you're open to exploring, use Kindu or similar apps to initiate those conversations. If you've been doing this for a while, but you aren't really fulfilled by the encounters, talk about what you'd like to change.

Find an App You Both Trust

Even in a trusting relationship, sensitive data can still be leaked if someone intercepts images, videos or live feeds. You'll need to decide together if that risk influences whether you'll show your faces or private areas of your bodies on cam. To mitigate some risk, I recommend using Signal because of its end-to-end encryption and other safety features. If you're interested in incorporating toys, try Lovense, which offers interactive sex toys that allow couples to control each other's experiences from a distance. You can try other toys that offers similar features, but I like this one for its secure platform.

Choose a Comfortable Spot

And plan to be there a while. I always appreciate spending time together before getting to the deed. It's like foreplay to foreplay if we can to share a game or laugh together. Instead of hopping on camera already in the nude, treat this experience like a date. You're spending time with someone you know and care about, so make sure they know they mean more to you than the sex itself.

When it's time to get down to business, you'll have settled into your cozy nook. Check in with each other to make sure you're both ready before transitioning to intimacy. Don't be the person who just, well, whips it out—unless you know you're both into that.

Spy on Each Other

If you've been at this a while or you want to be more adventurous, consider moving to a less traditional location where you can be more playful—like the shower, outside in a secluded backyard or on the kitchen table with some dessert. Of course, you could interact with your partner during this time, but I think it's fun to pretend I don't even know they're watching. Bring a desk lamp with you to act as a spotlight or choose a space with natural sunlight if you want your part-

On a video chat, I once made my partner come by eating apple slices, and you could entice your partner with another sexy treat.

ner to see you well. Opt for a darker room for a grittier, voyeuristic experience.

Use More of Your Senses

Cyber sex often focuses on the sights and sounds on-screen, but it's just as important to make sure you enjoy the tastes, smells, and touch of the experience. On a video chat, I once made my partner come by eating apple slices. You could entice your partner with another sexy treat. Prepare the same meal or eat a similar dessert together if you want to feel connected. Dim the lights and light candles to set the mood for yourself. Use a clothing item that smells like your partner or order some of their signature scent to make them feel closer. Enjoy the experience as a holistic encounter if you need help feeling present or want to pamper yourselves.

Tease and Tempt

It's empowering to be a bit of a tease. Experiences where both my partner and I remain modest are often even sexier and more exciting for me. The outfits you're used to seeing each other in—lounge clothes, a work uniform or office attire—will likely feel familiar but invoke a sense of longing if you've been apart for a while.

If you prefer not to strip and show off your bodies, watch each other's lips, listen to each other's whispers and moans, and notice each other's subtle reactions in the shoulders or brows. Look right at the camera lens instead of the screen to appear as though you're gazing deeply into your partner's eyes. Bite your lip or smirk to let your partner know you're feeling naughty. The tension in these moments will help you build enough confidence to take it to the next level if you choose, but sometimes teasing is all that's needed to get off.

Try New Positions

Most men I've shared these experiences with sit at a desk or in bed with their cameras pointed at their crotch, but I'm less intrigued by someone's pumping hand. There's nothing wrong with showing your bottom up close to the screen or highlighting other private parts if you and your partner prefer, but I long to watch facial expressions—especially a partner's eyes widening with exhilaration or closing slightly as they relax. If both partners are willing, incorporate some aspect of sharing your faces—even if it doesn't include the rest of your bodies—instead of solely swapping images of your genitals.

Your body's position will dictate how you're connecting with your partner, and it might make a big difference to both of you. Do you and your partner want an experience that's more romantic? Raunchy? Don't be afraid to request a shift in position or adjust your own camera as needed. This kind of communication is important, just like it's important to say something if a certain position, touch or rhythm isn't working when you're in person—or if you're dying to see part of your partner's body that they've been too shy to show.

If you want to direct each other, you could play a game of alternating Simon Says. Games, such as Sex Dice and Truth or Dare, will spice things up. Move around and play with the zoom as needed to show each other a new view.

Watch Yourself on Camera

I tend to keep my own camera's feed in a small box at the top center of my screen so I can keep an eye on what I look like as I also look into the lens. I feel more comfortable knowing exactly what I'm showing to my partner, and it can be fun to learn more about what my facial expressions and body look like while I'm in the zone. I suggest using this feature to help you explore your own body when you want to and hiding that view if it becomes too distracting.

Show Each Other What You Like

Although cyber sex doesn't have to be a tutorial, it's still a perfect format to show your partner how you love to be touched. Camming showed my spouse how to help me reach orgasm. I'm very familiar with my body, and a mobile camera lets me show them exactly what I want them to rub, lick or suck without the awkward fumbles of an in-person encounter. I get to say out loud what I want them to do to me without the pressure of them feeling like they need to get there now.

Avoid using yes-or-no questions to lead the conversation. Say things like, "What do you wish I could do to you right now?" and "How should I use my hands and tongue?" Explain your own needs and use this opportunity to show while you tell. This time apart will help you come back together with an even stronger connection if you use the time to share about your desires and teach each other new moves on-screen.

Cybersex doesn't have to be a tutorial, it's still a perfect format to show your partner how you love to be touched.

THE DOPE TUTOR ANSWERS:

WHAT DOES WEED LAW HAVE TO DO WITH RACISM?

BY **ANDREW DEANGELO** ILLUSTRATION BY **RICHARD A. CHANCE**

The history of cannabis law in America is one of injustice, with people of color bearing the brunt of a system weighted against them

As with many things in America, the cannabis experience for white people has been different from the cannabis experience for people of color. White citizens have used and traded cannabis at nearly the same rates as Black and Brown people, but Black and Brown people have been arrested nearly four times as often. In most cases, people of color have done jail time while people like me were able to grow wealth in the cannabis industry—both underground and, more recently, legally. There is no doubt that the color of my skin has given me untold advantages others do not enjoy.

The racist history of federal cannabis prohibition in the United States is the subject of Fab 5 Freddy's Netflix documentary masterpiece Grass Is Greener. With his cast of musical icons, the filmmaker exposes the story of how mid-level bureaucrat Harry J. Anslinger ascended to be the nation's first drug czar on the backs of Black jazz musicians and Brown citizens, a tale both shocking and unsurprising for 1930s America. F

or 30 years Anslinger promoted racist propaganda and policy that resulted in much higher rates of drug-related arrests and imprisonment for people of color. Then in 1970 President Richard Nixon, another racist in a position of great power, launched the Controlled Substances Act, famously classifying cannabis as a Schedule 1 drug so he could go after his two biggest enemies, Blacks and hippies, and the DEA was born. Old Anslinger even came out of retirement for the ceremony.

"It was never about the cannabis," Freddy tells me, "but about the people who were using it, plain and simple."

Cannabis prohibition was really just a war on people of color, another way to rob them of opportunity and justice.

Ronald Reagan rode a wave of conservative promises to the White House in 1980. With the launch of the "Just Say No" campaign promoted by First Lady Nancy Reagan, mandatory minimums and racial sentencing disparities proliferated. Widespread workplace urinalysis testing arose in the 1980s, further putting pressure on communities of color as jobs were lost, income obliterated and children removed from families due to a failed drug test or a weed possession charge. As funding for the drug war skyrocketed, even public schools began to embed police and practice urinalysis screening. The so-called school-to-prison pipeline that haunts some Black and Brown communities to this day is due in large part to the unjust cannabis policies and overpolicing that targeted those communities.

So how do we right these wrongs now?

"The fight is trying to clean the American house of this evil infection called racism that is the root cause of everything from drug wars to a lack of ownership in the legal cannabis industry, or any other industry," says Freddy.

Today Black Americans own just 4 percent of the legal cannabis industry, while whites own 81 percent. Those in the cannabis business have a moral obligation to commit to social equity (not least because that aligns with the values the plant teaches us). Given the gross injustices of the past, Black and Brown people must be empowered in the legal cannabis industry to have ownership, equity and wealth created for and by themselves. This is the true promise of cannabis law reform.

Kassandra Frederique, executive director of the Drug Policy Alliance, put it simply in Grass Is Greener: "The solution has to be more comprehensive than the damage that has been done."

Most importantly, social equity represents a sacred promise that our industry must keep to right the wrongs of the past and begin to heal the inequities that permeate our society. That promise cannot be kept until more people of color attain positions of power and ownership in the legal cannabis industry.

Cannabis prohibition was really just a war on people of color, another way to rob them of opportunity and justice.

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